



OSCE Networking Platform
of Women Leaders, including
Peacebuilders and Mediators

2023-2024 Edition

OSCE WOMEN'S PEACE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME:

Empowering the Next Generation of Women Leaders



Organization for Security and
Co-operation in Europe



WIN –
Women & Men Innovating &
Networking for Gender Equality

WOMEN'S PEACE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Women's leadership and meaningful inclusion in peace and conflict resolution efforts stand at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security and are a precondition for achieving peace and stability across the OSCE region and beyond.

On 7 December 2021, the OSCE launched the Networking Platform for Women Leaders, including Peacebuilders and Mediators. The platform has become an important tool to increase networking opportunities for women mediators and peacebuilders, providing a safe space for them to learn, share best practices, and build connections.

As part of this initiative, the Women's Peace Leadership Programme (WPLP) was launched in October 2022 as part of the multi-year project WIN for Women and Men. The high-level mentoring initiative was designed to support and empower women peacebuilders from across the OSCE region and Afghanistan through extensive training on leadership, mediation, and communication skills, as well as mentoring by internationally renowned women leaders.

Following the culmination of the first edition of the programme, a second edition was launched in 2023, targeting 16 women active in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the OSCE area as well as Afghanistan.

The programme has continued to offer tailor-designed opportunities to engage with concepts and skills relevant to peacebuilding work. Of equal importance, it has also created regular, structured time to gather with fellow practitioners to foster reflection and deepen relationships within the group and with the group of external mentors that supported them. The theory of change of the programme is that by creating opportunities for networking and peer support participants will be better placed to meaningfully engage and influence peace processes at different levels.



It is very simple: a society cannot recover from conflict or develop the necessary tools to avoid repetition unless you have an inclusive peacebuilding process. When you exclude half of the population from the equation, you are bound to live an incomplete peace –

OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid



KEY ACTIVITIES

→ Programme Kick-Off, October 2023



The online launch included a welcome video from the OSCE Secretary General, and served as an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and get familiar with the other participants.

→ Monthly Community of Practice Sessions

The community of practice (COPs) sessions are foundational to the WPLP, consisting of regular, monthly, online gatherings that have served as a touch point for the core peace leadership cohort. These gatherings created the opportunity to build knowledge along key themes of interest to the group, to deepen relationships and to engage in problem-solving and exchange in one another's work. Some of the topics covered during the CoPs included:

FOUNDATIONS FOR PEACE LEADERSHIP

This two-part series set the foundations for the programme, exploring the peace leadership fundamentals of values, vision and strategy. The focus included addressing the dual nature of peace leadership, including the personal and the political, the self and the system. In these sessions some guiding frameworks were introduced which were drawn on over the course of the WPLP programme.

The Craft and Practice of Peer Mentoring

These two sessions focused on the theory and practice of mentoring - which is seen as a key leadership skill: the art of asking questions, listening deeply and actively, eliciting and respecting individual's analysis. The purpose of these two sessions was for the participants to deepen their advisory/coaching skills as well as to facilitate sharing of the group's insights and strategies arising from their own work.

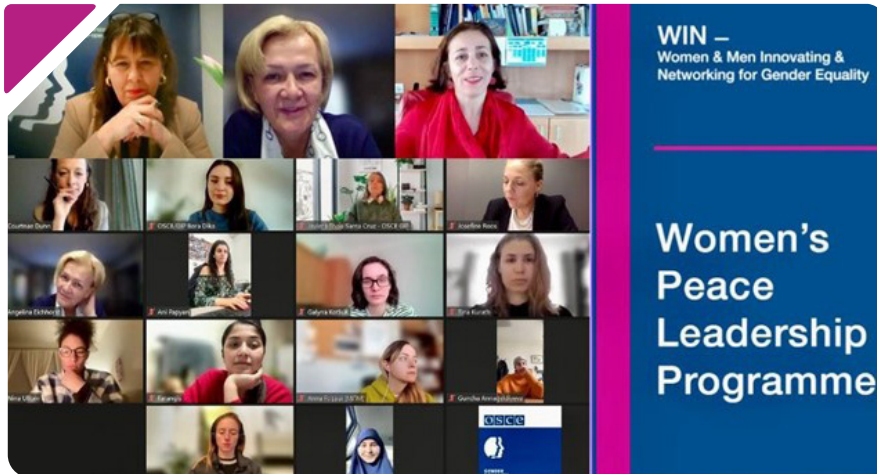
Foundations for Embodied and Resilient Peace Leadership

This session focused on the work from the Trauma Resource Institute spending time introducing the Community Resiliency Model. This model seeks to educate individuals about the biology and neurophysiology of trauma, stress and resilience as well as teach simple biologically-based wellness skills, which can help reset and stabilize the nervous system. The participants discussed how this can be applied to their individual lives and work and specifically how it can impact how we show up grounded and resources in the political spaces they move.

Leading in Complexity - Systems Leadership

The session focused on the topic of leading in complexity. We more and more often hear the narrative that we live in a complex world, and that our challenges are not complicated, but complex. This session explored complexity theories and practices, looking at how to navigate complexity in their peace leadership. Participants drew, connected and built upon the other topics such as polarities, trauma informed practices and embodiment, as they help them to be more fit for complexity.

→ Fireside Chat Series with External Mentors



Drawing from inspiring and esteemed peacebuilding leaders within the OSCE network, the fireside chats allowed participants to learn from the external mentors' practice and experience in a range of perspectives (civil society, diplomats, formal and insider mediators).

Fireside chats were led by the following external mentors:

- **ANNIKA SÖDER**, former State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden
- **LARA SCARPITTA**, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues
- **ANGELINA EICHHORST**, Managing director for Europe and CA at the EU External Action Service
- **AYŞE BETÜL ÇELİK**, Professor of conflict analysis and resolution at Sabanci University
- **SOFIA MOREIRA DE SOUSA**, Head of the European Commission's Representation to Portugal
- **IRIS LUARASI**, President of the Counseling Line for Women and Girls
- **LOREDANA TEODORESCU**, President of the Italian antenna of Women in International Security

→ Individual Coaching

The one-on-one leadership coaching component further identified and supported the personal and professional leadership development goals of each of the peace leaders in the cohort.

→ In-person Networking and Training with the OSCE in Vienna and Krems, April 2024



Drawing on the rich network of experts within the OSCE the programme conducted a training in Vienna focusing on facilitating dialogue and mediation.

The programme included:

- **Advancing Women's Meaningful Participation in Peace and Security: Exchange with OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and OSCE Ambassadors**
- **Mediation & Dialogue Training**
- **Gender Mainstreaming in Natural Resources Management and Mediation**
- **Violence Against Women**
- **Community of Practice and Peer Mentoring**

→ External Mentoring, March - June 2024

Drawing on an extraordinary pool of senior women mediators, diplomats and peacebuilders, a group of external mentors served as thought partners to the core participants through one-on-one mentoring. This consisted of one to three, one-hour virtual meetings. In addition to the women mediators mentioned in the Fire-side Chats section, Ambassador Gesa Braeutigam, Special Envoy for Feminist Foreign Policy and Director for Human Rights and Robin Wettlaunfer, Director of Canada's Centre for International Digital Policy and Information Integrity were also mentors.



IMPACT

Just as peace leadership as a practice is focused on the intersection of the personal and the professional, what follows is divided into two parts: Professional Impact and Personal Impact. The interviews with the participants demonstrate the programme's impact. In terms of visibility, it is clear that the programme boosted the participant's professional visibility, both online (through LinkedIn posts and social media promotion) and in-person through connecting participants with the Secretary General and ambassadors, as well as through conferences and speaking events where the participants could be connected to the OSCE WPLP Programme. This visibility and association promoted the women's professional development, by enhancing the recognition they received within their existing networks and jobs, by providing them with new opportunities, and by boosting their self-confidence.



I posted about the programme on LinkedIn and Facebook. So many women were curious about the programme and it really expanded my network. As a result, I was also approached for job opportunities that I had not applied to."

In addition to the active networking – specific professional development skills were reported as a result of this programme. Participants stressed that they were able to use the technical skills they learnt to inform their work or inspire training programmes they were leading. Increased technical skills, combined with the practice in communication led to their increased capacity to lead, with participants demonstrating more confidence and proactivity as a result of the programme.



The capacity building was really useful. I am able to guide colleagues based on the information that we were provided with."

The resulting network, support and community that the women found in one another was most certainly a powerful outcome of this year-long programme. For many, the chance to be in the company (both online and in person) of fellow women peacebuilders bolstered their motivation and offered new ideas. Critical for the sustainability of their work, was the sense of solidarity and support that many cited as a result of the peer mentoring and frequent, consistent trust building that occurred over the year. The personal impact was notable as many felt they got clearer about their purpose and more skills to meet the demands of their work. Below are a series of examples of the Professional and Personal impact.



RESULTS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

→ Visibility: being associated with the OSCE and networks that open doors

A critical ingredient of what made this programme successful was the combination of the active role of the OSCE by leveraging professional and political network and the exceptional community building and relationship care. Several of the participants reported that the visibility the programme offered, how it connected them professionally with the OSCE, and the opportunities it provided them with were one of the most impactful aspects of the programme.



The fact that my activism is now associated with the OSCE and the SG has helped my profile. The OSCE showed to the world that there is a girl in Turkmenistan whose work is relevant. And while my work remains the same - now the recognition is there."

RESULTS: PERSONAL IMPACT AND DEVELOPMENT

Beyond the more technical aspects of the programme, the peace leaders found that as a result of the programme they have increased self-awareness and ability to deal with the emotional and personal aspects of peace leadership. As a consequence, they feel more confident in their values and their ability to contribute, supporting them to be even better peace leaders.



Confidence was the most challenging issue for me. I was scared I would not fit this programme. Listening to higher level people and their experience as young, combined with the 3 days with peace leaders - I felt that everyone goes through some challenges. I feel much more confident - in my daily work I feel more confident sharing my ideas."

CONTINUED SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL PLATFORMS

A key factor contributing to the success of the WPLP is the unwavering support and dedicated commitment provided to its participants throughout their journey. Recognizing that effective leadership development requires diverse spaces and ample opportunities for personal and professional growth, the programme goes beyond traditional training methods. Participants are offered a wide array of engaging experiences, including the chance to attend and contribute to both OSCE-organized events and external gatherings. These valuable opportunities extend to participation in prestigious international platforms, where emerging leaders can network, share insights, and gain global perspectives.

→ OSCE Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Conference, Tetovo 2023



WPLP Participant **Heela Yoon** joins the OSCE Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Conference organized in Tetovo by the OSCE 2023 Chairpersonship of North Macedonia. The panel highlighted existing commitments and the good work done in the OSCE region to enhance the position of women and girls, including supporting the implementation of the 2004 Action Plan on Gender Equality, in relation to all three dimensions.



→ Geneva Peace Week 2023



WPLP Participant **Anna Popsui** took part in the Geneva Peace Week event “My Voice, Our Peace! Connecting Women Peace Leaders from Afghanistan and Ukraine,” co-organized by the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Center for Dialogue and Progress, and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. The event provided a unique opportunity to discuss the main barriers to women’s inclusion in peace and security efforts in conflict settings. Participants offered concrete recommendations on how the international community can address growing threats to women’s rights and gender inequalities exacerbated by conflicts. The distinguished panel included Nobel Peace Prize nominee Fawzia Koofi from Afghanistan.

→ Munich Security Conference 2024

Upon invitation from the OSCE Secretary General, WPLP Participant **Guncha Annageldiyeva** attended the 2024 Munich Security Conference. Participants shared insights about their work processes and had the opportunity to generate new ideas for foreign, security, and development policy. Guncha also attended a dinner marking the launch of the MSC Women Parliamentarians Programme. This gathering provided another platform for the diverse group of parliamentarians to exchange ideas and develop innovative approaches to global challenges.



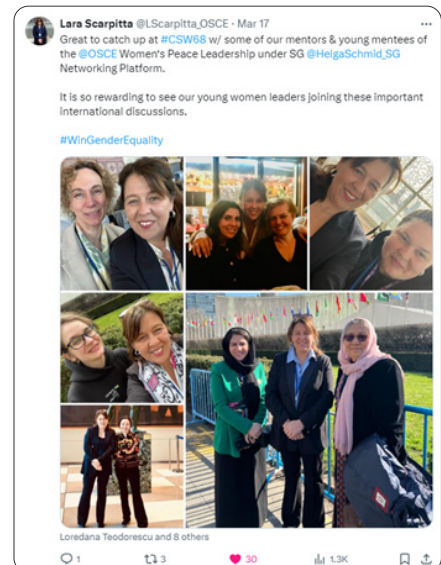
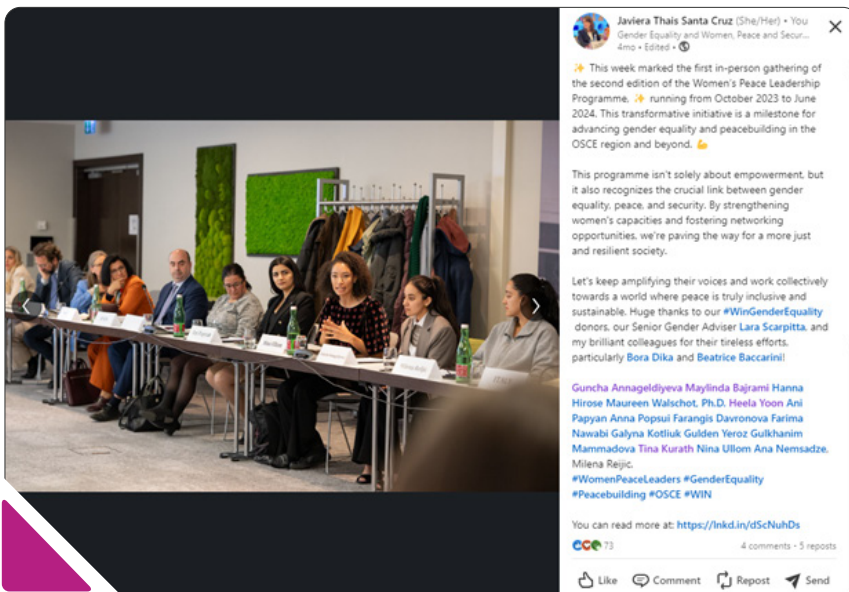
→ Roundtable of Albanian Activists, Tirana 2024



In April 2024, WPLP participant **Maylinda Bajrami** organized a meeting with 16 young Albanian activists. This gathering served as a platform for meaningful dialogue and exchange of ideas among the country’s emerging leaders. The event was structured around an open and inclusive discussion format, providing each participant with the opportunity to share their unique perspectives and experiences. After these insightful talks, the young activists discussed how the OSCE could further support their initiatives and work.

SUPPORTING ONLINE VISIBILITY

Visibility is a crucial aspect of the WPLP, as it helps participants amplify their reach and impact through digital platforms. Sharing stories from participants and the program highlights the successes and challenges women face in peacebuilding, making their stories relatable and compelling. These narratives serve as powerful advocacy tools, influencing public opinion, driving policy change, and inspiring more women to take on leadership roles in peace and security efforts.



CONCLUSION

While the second edition of this programme is still ongoing, clear key messages of its power have emerged. Firstly, experience from both cohorts confirms that the space created by the OSCE, combined with its network provided visibility and opened doors, which enabled the participants to increase their peace leadership influence. Secondly, the power of coming together with peers, to share challenges and successes, especially in person, was a major success factor of the programme.

PLANNED / UPCOMING

- **Launch of the WPLP Alumni Network in September 2024:** The network responds to participant requests from the first two cohorts who valued their shared experiences and relationships. These 28 women, from diverse thematic interests and geographic contexts, show great potential for cross-cohort collaboration. A formal network will facilitate ongoing exchange, foster growth, and create opportunities for alumni to engage in future WPLP and OSCE activities.
- **In-person closing event in Vienna, November 2024**



The activities of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme are implemented through the extrabudgetary project WIN.

For more information on WIN activities: www.winprojectosce.org

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