

2020

Annual Progress Report

on the Implementation of the OSCE 2004 Action Plan on the Promotion of Gender Equality

Towards Gender Equality in the OSCE



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMSC	Border Management Staff College
CFT	Countering the financing of terrorism
CPC	Conflict Prevention Centre
CRMS	Common Regulatory Management System
CSO	Civil society organization
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DHR	Department of Human Resources
EU	European Union
ESC	Entrepreneurship Support Centre
ExB	Extra-Budgetary
GAP	OSCE 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality
GERC	Gender Equality Review Conference
GFP	Gender focal point
HoM	Head of Mission
IFM	Institute for Forensic Medicine
MP	Member of parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRI	National human rights institution
OCEEA	Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OIO	Office of Internal Oversight
OM	Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE PA	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
PCU	Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine
PCUz	Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan
POiB	Programme Office in Bishkek
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SMM	OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine
TNTD	Transnational Threats Department
UB	Unified Budget
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
WPS	Women, peace and security
WRC	Women's Resource Centre

The year 2020 was a difficult one for gender equality. The coronavirus pandemic had a disproportionate effect on women and girls around the world. Women were often front-line responders against COVID-19, experiencing direct exposure to the virus but remaining excluded from response planning and decision-making. The crisis threatened many women's economic security and pushed them towards more unpaid care. Incidents of gender-based violence – particularly domestic violence – surged while lockdown measures and pressure on the resourcing and staffing of service providers such as shelters and hotlines hampered access to help.

The OSCE was swift to contribute to mitigating the gendered challenges posed by the pandemic. OSCE executive structures worked hand in hand with local women's groups to support victims of gender-based violence, helped improve police response to domestic violence, joined forces with national stakeholders to empower women to cope with the economic fallout from COVID-19 and provided analyses of the gendered impacts of responses to the pandemic and recommendations for recovery policies. This report provides concrete example of such actions.

Moving forward, we need to place women and girls at the centre of our efforts to craft the post-pandemic future. In accordance with the provisions of the Organization's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (GAP), the OSCE will continue to play its part in supporting participating States to that effect, starting with equal representation in decision-making, as well as women's economic empowerment, and stepping up the protection of women and girls against violence. In so doing, executive structures will be able to rely on a strengthened skill set of their staff for gender-sensitive programming and implementation, as we are currently developing a more systematic Organization-wide approach to developing capacity for mainstreaming gender across all activities.

As an organization, we want to lead by example. We have made some encouraging progress towards gender parity: the OSCE moved from an average of 30 per cent of women in senior leadership between 2015 and 2019 to 42 per cent in December 2020. This represents an important milestone, but before we can achieve parity in all staff categories by 2026 as set out in the OSCE Gender Parity Strategy, we still have some work ahead of us. At 20 per cent, the share of women leading OSCE field operations remains disappointingly low, and less than one quarter of seconded and international contracted staff working in the field are women. I will continue to push for a more diverse and fully gender-balanced workforce across the Organization and to support all efforts that empower and encourage the next generation of female leaders who want to work for peace and security.

The past year has taught us that hard-won progress towards gender equality can quickly come undone. We must accelerate the implementation of the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, and we must do so with a new sense of urgency because lost progress can take years to regain. I rely on your continued commitment to support the OSCE's work for the full and equal exercise by women and men of their human rights for the benefit of comprehensive security in the OSCE area. In turn, you can count on my unwavering dedication to gender equality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Schmid', written in a cursive style.

Helga Maria Schmid

OSCE Secretary General

July 2021

Highlights

Despite all the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the OSCE saw important achievements towards gender equality:

Rapid response to the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Many OSCE executive structures were quick to recognize the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls. The Secretariat, institutions and field operations conducted research, organized knowledge-sharing events and provided practical support to participating States.
- Executive structures conducted rapid assessments and analyses that highlighted the impact of the pandemic and lockdown measures on women and girls. The Gender Issues Programme organized webinars on the topic; field operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia reviewed emergency measures; and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published an analysis of the impact of emergency measures on human rights.
- Field operations provided direct, hands-on support to participating States to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. As domestic violence soared during the crisis, the bulk of the OSCE's COVID-19 response focused on the prevention of domestic violence, access to essential services and direct support for women victims of violence. Executive structures worked closely with women's organizations that are on the front line of the COVID-19 response in communities. Overall, at least 8,000 women benefited from the OSCE's practical assistance during the pandemic.
- The Gender Issues Programme organized a networking event for women peacebuilders to exchange views with representatives from the international community on specific issues and challenges for women caused by the COVID-19 pandemic response measures in their countries.
- Internally, executive structures quickly adapted to new online formats and remote working modalities and successfully organized meetings, conferences and events. As a positive side effect, these were accessible to a much wider audience than in-person meetings.

A thorough review of progress in gender equality in the OSCE area

- A series of high-level stocktaking events marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.
- Four thematic discussion papers and a study called "*Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*" provided an assessment of and recommendations for the implementation of OSCE gender equality-related commitments.

- The OSCE's Third Gender Equality Review Conference (GERC), held in October 2020, jointly organized by the Albanian Chair-in-Office, ODIHR and the Secretariat, discussed progress, gaps and challenges to gender equality and proposed recommendations for moving forward.

More women in the OSCE leadership: gender parity reached at director's level

- Gender parity was reached at the level of Secretariat directors and heads of OSCE institutions.
- The percentage of women in senior management (S4/P5 and above) increased from 29 per cent in 2019 to 42 per cent in 2020, achieving one of the interim targets of the OSCE Gender Parity Strategy. For the first time, gender parity was reached at the level of Deputy Head of Mission in field operations.

Strengthened internal mechanisms for gender equality

- The Task Force on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse finalized and submitted a series of recommendations for a comprehensive and Organization-wide approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Some 3,500 staff members took part in a newly introduced mandatory online training course on combating sexual harassment, and over 1,000 staff members attended facilitator-led sessions.

Better staff knowledge and skills on gender equality

- The introduction of mandatory e-learning modules on gender equality resulted in 99 per cent of staff who acquired more awareness and a better understanding of gender equality.
- The first Organization-wide staff capacity assessment provided a baseline for future training activities and a more systematic approach to building institutional capacities in gender mainstreaming.
- A campaign called "Bias bites" – to raise awareness of the impact of unconscious bias in the workplace – reached all Secretariat staff and was replicated at the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the Mission to Moldova and ODIHR.

Recommendations

The Organization has made improvements in workplace gender equality, but it remains a work in progress. Considering that the pandemic caused a setback for women's rights and gender equality, executive structures will have to redouble their efforts to make sure that all their activities also have a meaningful impact for women and girls.

1. Step up efforts to foster a gender-sensitive, inclusive management culture and working environment:
 - Finalize revisions to the Code of Conduct, Staff Instruction 21 on the professional working environment, and finalize the new whistle-blower policy and policy on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).
 - Design and implement staff training on PSEA.
 - Conduct an Organization-wide staff survey on the working environment.
 - Roll out the second iteration of the gender-responsive leadership programme and expand it to encompass senior-level staff and programme managers across all executive structures.
2. Focus on increasing the number of women nominated by participating States to seconded positions, especially in field operations. Encourage participating States to nominate more female candidates for Head of Mission in field operations.
3. Increase the number of staff with specialized and targeted knowledge and skills for mainstreaming gender in their work by introducing training modules tailored to the OSCE and all three dimensions of security. Enhance staff gender-mainstreaming capacities in particular in the politico-military and economic and environmental dimensions.
4. Actively address the gender inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically by:
 - a. Supporting women leaders in communities, women's movements and political parties, also in local, regional and national governments by promoting gender-balanced and inclusive decision-making; developing national road maps and programmes to transform institutions so they deliver for the benefit of all women and men in our societies.
 - b. Systematically implementing activities to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women and girls in all areas of the OSCE's security mandate; building the capacity of OSCE staff to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including trafficking in human beings, in line with international standards (including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Palermo Protocol and other relevant commitments), both internally and in all OSCE programmes that promote comprehensive security.
 - c. Fostering women's economic security by recommending policy and legal frameworks that ensure women's access to the labour market in line with international labour standards and promoting an enabling business environment for women entrepreneurs, especially in the digital economy; addressing the specific

needs of women in vulnerable situations and from socially marginalized groups, including survivors of violence and human trafficking, as well as women belonging to minority groups.

- d. Focusing on closing the gender digital gap by fully mainstreaming gender in all technology and innovation projects, programmes and activities and providing capacity-building to OSCE participating States to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to combat violence faced by women and girls through digital technologies.
 - e. Supporting women peacebuilders in the OSCE region through capacity-building, networking and mentoring activities; developing guidance and tools to improve staff capacity and awareness on the women, peace and security agenda as an integral part of comprehensive security; continuing work on implementing the OSCE publication *Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit*.
5. Make full use of international platforms such as the [Generation Equality Forum](#) to exchange good practice and knowledge as well as develop new partnerships and deepen existing ones. Work internally to improve collaboration and create synergies among executive structures working on gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

The present report assesses progress in the implementation of the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (MC.DEC/14/04) in 2020 (GAP).

Following the structure of the GAP, the report first investigates how gender equality has been promoted within the Organization and describes progress and trends in gender-mainstreaming policies and programmes. It then describes how the Organization has supported participating States in furthering gender equality in the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions of security by providing examples of results achieved by executive structures in 2020. Given the extraordinary circumstances imposed by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the report also includes a section describing the executive structures' support to help women and girls cope with some of the pandemic's impacts on their security. Finally, the report offers recommendations to close gaps and accelerate the achievement of gender equality.

The findings of this report draw on the reports of the Organization's executive structures in response to a self-assessment questionnaire designed by the Gender Issues Programme. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) also took part in the exercise. Progress was measured against targets set in the 2019 Gender Parity Strategy, recommendations from the "Special Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019)" (SEC.GAL/96/20) and recommendations from the "Thematic Evaluation of the Implementation of the OSCE's 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality", by the Office of Internal Oversight, issued in early 2018.

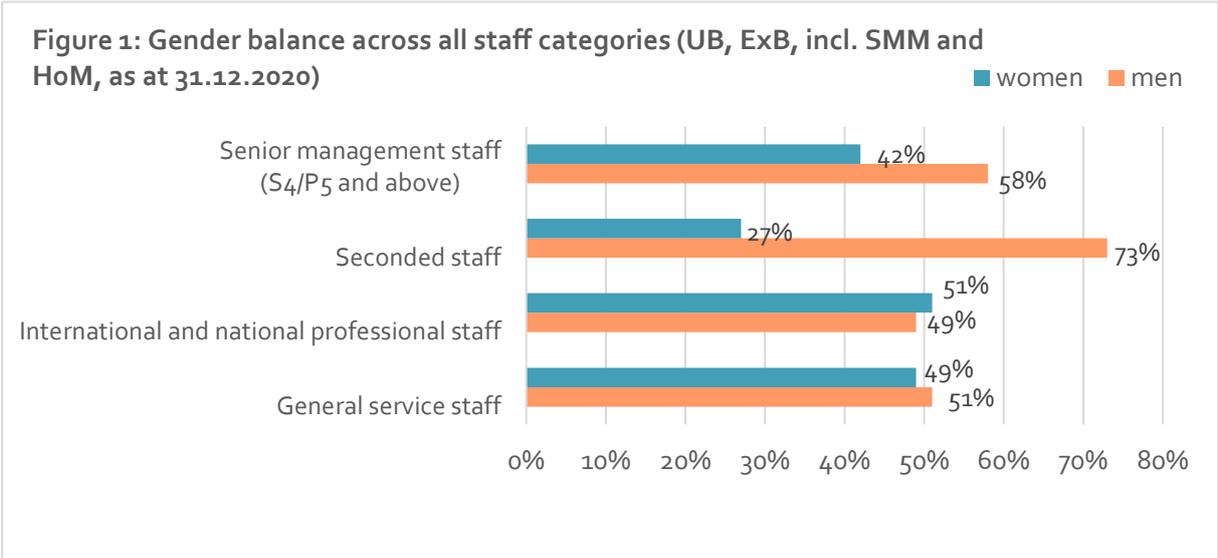
1. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE OSCE

In 2020, the Gender Parity Strategy produced its first results, as the gender balance in the Organization's senior leadership improved considerably. Comprehensive measures in recruitment and talent management contributed to a more diverse and equal workforce that is increasingly aware of gender equality principles. The institutional architecture for gender equality and the development of mainstreaming capacities in executive structures remain works in progress, as the Organization seeks to improve its gender equality-related work.

1.1. PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER PARITY

Progress towards gender parity in 2020 is measured against the 2019 OSCE Gender Parity Strategy, which set interim and final targets in addition to providing for measures to create an enabling, inclusive work environment; to implement talent management measures; and to strengthen leadership and accountability for gender equality.

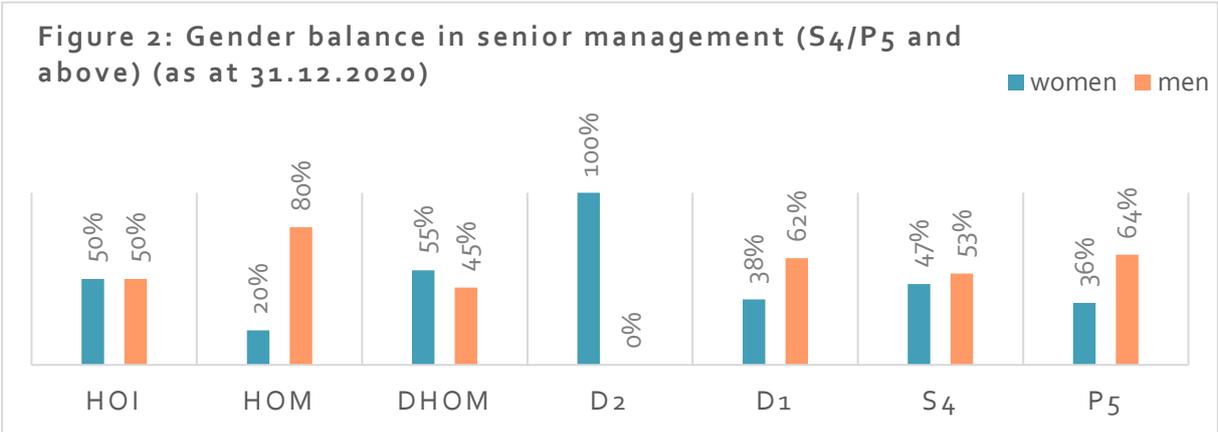
Overall, the Organization comes close to equal representation in the different staff categories. The statistical outlier is the seconded staff category, where the share of women remains low.



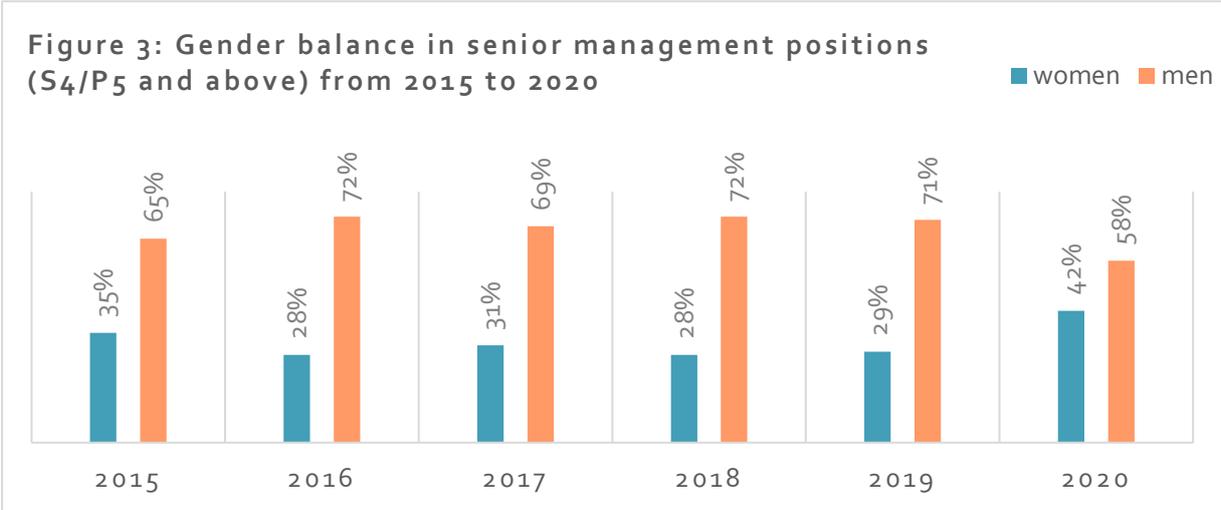
The year 2020 saw important achievements towards gender parity at senior levels. Three years ahead of the 2023 interim target date set in the Gender Parity Strategy, the proportion of women in senior management posts across all categories (S4, P5 and above) was 42 per cent in December 2020.

The share of women in senior management posts in the seconded category (S4+) increased from 22 per cent in December 2018 to 43 per cent in December 2020. This exceeds the 2023 interim target of 30 per cent. At the same time, the Head of Mission (HoM) category has the lowest representation of women, at only 20 per cent at the end of 2020. Only 30 per cent of candidates nominated by participating States for the seven HoM positions that were vacant last year were women.

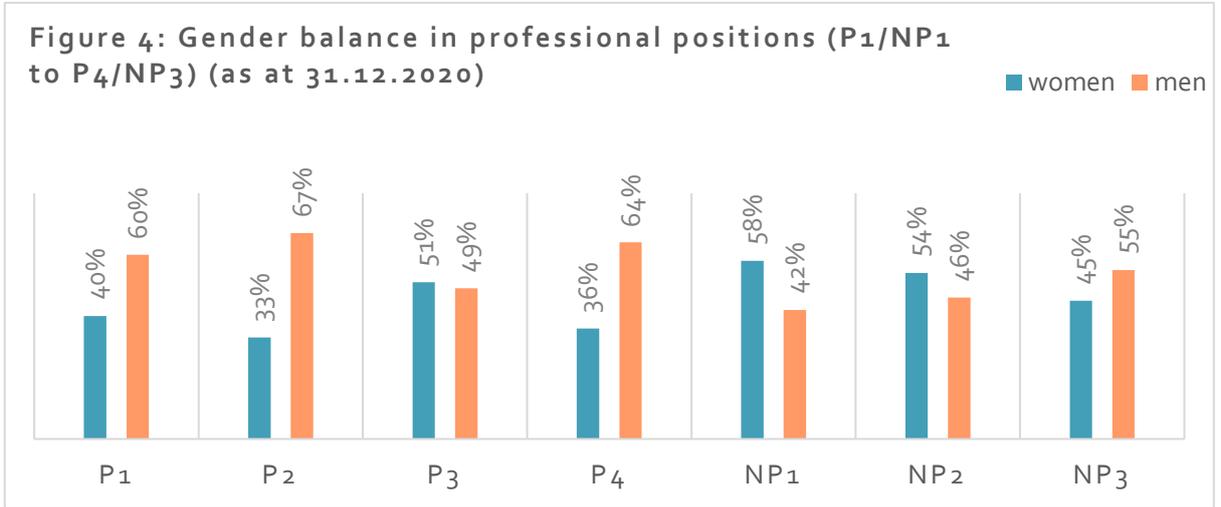
The representation of women in senior management posts in the contracted category (P5+) increased too, from 28 per cent in December 2018 to 39 per cent in December 2020 (the interim target is 50 per cent in 2021). Gender parity among senior management in the OSCE Secretariat improved by hiring four female directors: the Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC), the Director of the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO), the OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats and the Director of the Department of Management. The Secretariat thereby reached full parity at the level of directors, which was previously at 62 per cent male and 38 per cent female representation.



The leap in female representation among the OSCE’s leadership in 2020 is illustrated in Figure 3 below, which provides a five-year overview of sex-disaggregated data of senior management staff (S4/P5 and above) across the Organization. Challenges remain in mid-career professional categories and in the field.



Limited progress has been achieved at the P4 level, where female representation remains low and only increased by 5 percentage points (from 31 per cent women in December 2018 to 36 per cent women in November 2020). The diversification of staff at this level is essential, as P4 job holders are programme managers and form a talent pool for the recruitment of senior professionals.



In OSCE field operations, women account for only 24 per cent of staff members in seconded posts (S1–S3 level) and 20 per cent in international contracted posts. This is in part due to the low representation of women among monitoring officers at the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). The Department of Human Resources (DHR) will continue advocating for more nominations with the participating States and will continue its targeted outreach activities aimed at women.

Figure 5: Gender balance among seconded positions (S-HoM) (as at 31.12.2020)



1.2. RECRUITMENT

The DHR has sustained its efforts to increase the proportion of qualified female candidates and to eliminate bias in the hiring process. It has strengthened accountability on the part of managers and panel members for a lack of balance on shortlists and in selection recommendations by introducing a requirement for a rationale in the selection report in case they do not recommend a qualified and suitable candidate of an underrepresented group. Diversity scorecards and other relevant documents continue to be provided to the appointing manager to help inform selection decisions and are promoted in executive structures outside the Secretariat. In terms of training for better recruitment, the “Hiring Great People” course was revamped and contains a specific module on addressing all forms of unconscious bias, including gender bias.

Live events to attract a higher number of people to apply to work with the OSCE reached more than 3,700 potential candidates in 2020. Seventy per cent of the participants were women, 40 per cent of whom had never applied to the OSCE. In comparison, the previous two years had an overall reach of 3,500 potential candidates, with an average of 55 per cent women. The increase is the result of targeted outreach efforts, including:

- engagement with women’s groups such as professional organizations and associations;
- presentation of women and diverse individuals in job posts;
- mobilization of recruitment champions to activate their networks to encourage women and nationals of less-represented participating States to apply;
- an increase in the number of subscriptions to the *Talent Acquisition Newsletter* from 4,000 in 2018 to 16,000 in 2020, including a large number of women, professional organizations and associations across participating States;
- engagement of recruiters from across executive structures who employed similar strategies to promote the Organization as an employer of choice.

The Women’s Recruitment Bootcamp was converted into an online format and held at the end of 2020. Applications were requested from women with professional experience relevant to the OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security. Some 620 applications from 54 participating States were received for 40 available slots. Among the selected participants, 95 per cent had experience in

programmatic areas, and 50 per cent were from less-represented states. The applicants who were not selected will be considered for the next rounds of the recruitment bootcamp; meanwhile, those applicants received free resources from the Organization, including links to online tutorials on how to prepare a job application for the OSCE.

The *Talent Acquisition Newsletter* is tailored to areas of work and levels where women are underrepresented and has seen the addition of a Hiring Manager and Interview Board Members' Corner. The contributions under this section disseminate best practices in interviewing, including identifying and tackling implicit gender bias.

1.3. IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Accountability for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the Organization remains key to reaching the goals outlined in the GAP. The year 2020 marked the second round of reporting against mandatory gender-responsive objectives in performance management for all OSCE managers.

The majority of gender focal points (GFPs) – namely 74 per cent (compared with 68 per cent in 2019) – have also introduced gender-related objectives in their performance objectives as advised by the OIO in its thematic evaluation of the implementation of the GAP. This corresponds to an uptake of 14 per cent compared with 2019.

1.4. TALENT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The Organization has sustained its efforts to institutionalize basic gender training for all staff, including at the managerial and senior leadership levels, and invested in staff capacity to strengthen gender competencies. During the reporting period, 1,410 staff members (842 women and 568 men) attended basic gender courses organized by the Gender Issues Programme and/or executive structures. The bulk of the basic gender courses were delivered to SMM staff members (531 women and 468 men).

A course called "I Know Gender: An Introduction to Gender Equality for UN Staff" was introduced in 2019 as mandatory e-learning for staff members joining the OSCE. The course strengthens awareness and understanding of gender equality and women's empowerment and was completed by 3,551 OSCE officials (1,497 women and 2,054 men). The "All on Board" induction programme for new staff members is fully gender-mainstreamed. In addition, 977 staff members (468 women and 509 men) took part in advanced and specialized gender learning events in 2020. Online learning, including gender-related training, had already been gaining traction in the past few years, but the pandemic caused a surge in the use of e-learning in the OSCE. The high number of people receiving basic and advanced gender training in 2020 shows that remote teaching enables the Organization to reach out to many more learners across executive structures.

Overall follow-up learning evaluations have shown that responses to the training were positive and the immediate satisfaction was high. GFPs have also reported that colleagues exhibit a higher level of awareness of gender mainstreaming in their programmatic work, better knowledge of the gender markers system and more systematic use of gender-sensitive language. At the same time, the feedback from across the Organization is that the need for training in the formulation and use of gender-sensitive indicators remains high. In 2020, the Gender Issues Programme therefore conducted an Organization-wide capacity assessment of staff on gender mainstreaming. Some 1,401 respondents (40 per cent of all staff) took part in the survey, which found that there is a need for a

more systematic approach to staff capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. The survey findings will serve as a baseline for development activities in the coming years (also see Section 2.1).

All leadership programmes include modules on creating an inclusive work environment and working with unconscious gender bias. In addition, “Bias Bites”, a campaign to raise awareness of the impact of unconscious bias in the workplace, reached all Secretariat staff members. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The campaign began in an on-premises model and continued virtually in the latter part of the year. The positive feedback resulted in the replication of the programme at the OSCE Mission to Serbia, the Mission to Moldova and ODIHR.

The fourth edition of the Mentoring Programme for Women took place in 2020. It included 88 women mentees and 88 mentors from across 15 OSCE structures. Since the inception of the programme, the number of participants has increased from 36 in 2017 to 176 in 2020. The programme is demand-driven and was developed based on feedback from female staff members that a lack of developmental opportunities and limited access to professional networks were significant barriers to professional advancement.

1.5. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, ETHICS AND THE PROFESSIONAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The prevention of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse remains a priority for the Organization. In addition to the measures to address sexual harassment that were put in place in 2019, including the launch of an action plan by the then-Secretary General and the introduction of mandatory on-line anti-sexual harassment training for all OSCE officials, work towards building a comprehensive and co-ordinated Organization-wide response continued.

Ethics awareness-raising and standard setting activities were rolled out to promote an organizational culture of equality, integrity, respect, diversity, inclusion and accountability. Three mandatory e-learning courses (related to sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as safety and security) were completed by more than 3,500 staff in 2020, in addition to facilitator-led sessions reaching more than 1,000 OSCE officials. OSCE management has been encouraged to lead by example, to foster an inclusive, enabling work environment and to be open to accountability. In collaboration with the Gender Issues Programme and Conference and Language Services, a Code of Conduct compliance registration process for events was launched to address inappropriate behaviour on the part of participants, including sexual harassment. Co-operation with gender focal points took place through outreach within field operations to increase awareness of the Code of Conduct and expected standards of behaviour.

The first phase of consultation on the revision to the OSCE policy on the professional working environment and the new whistle-blower protection policy commenced, and a section on frequently asked questions is being added to the Code of Conduct. These policies will ensure that the OSCE working environment is respectful, inclusive and equitable. With the establishment of an Ethics Office in 2020, discretionary procedural steps were taken concerning the processing of complaints of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure additional gender-sensitive and victim-centred considerations in management’s response to various allegations.

At the end of 2020, the Office of Legal Affairs at the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the Gender Issues Programme, the OIO and the DHR, started the implementation of an extra-budgetary project that aims to develop an OSCE-wide policy on PSEA and to mainstream gender in the OSCE Common Regulatory Management System (CRMS) as required by the GAP. The project will, among other

activities, develop an OSCE Staff Instruction on PSEA, introduce related changes to relevant provisions of the CRMS and build capacities to investigate sexual exploitation and abuse and related misconduct on the part of relevant personnel.

Two staff-driven initiatives at the Secretariat contributed to the creation of a gender-sensitive working environment. The Women's Advisory Group provided a forum to share information, exchange views and raise awareness of gender equality in the workplace and organizational culture. It organized a town hall meeting with senior leadership to discuss ways to improve the working environment at the Secretariat. OSCE Men for Gender Equality was established as a cross-departmental group of male staff members from the Secretariat committed to fostering gender equality in the workplace by promoting equal treatment and opportunities for women and men, speaking out against gender-related inequalities and combating gender-based violence in the OSCE area.

ADDRESSING THE GENDERED IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic caused major disruptions in working practices, restricted social connections among colleagues and challenged work–life boundaries. In addition to the measures taken to prevent the transmission of the virus, the Organization also took steps to ensure business continuity and to enable staff to balance their private and professional commitments.

In addition to remote working, part-time work and staggered hours were made available to staff across the Organization, which was helpful for those who had to juggle work and care responsibilities – most often women. Recognizing the different individual circumstances and often gendered impact of the emergency measures on staff, the Gender Issues Programme and the DHR were quick to develop guidance to promote gender-sensitive management approaches during the pandemic.

The OIO conducted two Organization-wide surveys to explore how staff navigated the pandemic and how they assessed the OSCE's response to the crisis. Each survey registered around 1,900 responses. The findings confirmed that childcare obligations were more likely to have a negative impact on female respondents than on male respondents. In terms of staff morale, 13 per cent of the respondents reported having a poor or very poor state of well-being, with women and international staff being slightly more affected. Around 30 per cent of the respondents had some degree of concern that their performance might not be adequately captured in the context of remote work, with female staff and international staff slightly more concerned.

Overall, respondents expressed a rather high degree of satisfaction with the Organization's navigation of the crisis: In the two surveys, 71 per cent and 83 per cent of respondents found that the Organization had provided them with all necessary information regarding the COVID-19 situation. More than 60 per cent of respondents found that adaptability, communication and support for flexible working arrangements had been among the positive aspects of the OSCE's response to the pandemic.

Other surveys to examine workplace well-being among staff were carried out by the High Commissioner on National Minorities, ODIHR and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Many executive structures created small online support groups and organized virtual social events for their staff.

Given the nature of its work and being a non-family duty station, the Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints Gukovo and Donetsk could not offer home office or telecommuting opportunities to its staff but still was able to remain fully staffed and operational without any active COVID cases in the Mission's area. Both female and male observers worked in full force, performing 24-hour shifts and driving two hours per shift. Duty-of-care principles were fully applied while ensuring full implementation of the Mission's mandate.

1.6. IMPROVING INTERNAL MECHANISMS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

The GFPs are the backbone of the Organization's efforts to advance gender equality. They are the primary point of contact for gender issues within the respective executive structures and provide strategic advice to senior management in planning, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender mainstreaming in the work of their respective executive structures, and support OSCE staff in mainstreaming gender in all policies and projects. The GFPs often perform this role on top of their regular job duties.

Nine executive structures have appointed their main or alternate GFP at senior management levels (S4/P5 and above), three of whom are male and six are female. This represents 16 per cent of all main and alternate GFPs. In addition, three field operations have appointed GFPs or members of their gender working group in the office of the Head of Mission. Appointing GFPs at the senior level and/or in executive offices was an OIO recommendation to ensure that GFPs have direct access to leadership and decision-making for gender equality.

Women (67 per cent) continue to account for a higher percentage of GFPs than men (33 per cent), which confirms a long-standing trend of gender imbalance among GFPs. In fact, the number of male GFPs decreased by 17.5 per cent in 2020 compared with the previous year. Most of the GFPs in field operations work in the human dimension or on cross-dimensional issues (mainly gender equality), and fewer GFPs are based in the first- or second-dimension branches of their office.

Ten field operations have programmatic staff working on gender issues. The number of gender adviser positions that are fully dedicated to supporting internal mainstreaming efforts remains low, however. The gender advisers are based in ODIHR, the SMM, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme.

Co-ordination mechanisms for gender equality are increasing, with ten field operations, two institutions and the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) having set up internal gender equality working groups. Their functions include the development, review and implementation of gender action plans; co-ordination of gender-related activities; and support for gender-mainstreaming efforts. As recommended in the 2018 OIO evaluation of the implementation of the GAP, these working groups typically include staff working on the three security dimensions, administrative staff, as well as senior staff and representatives from executive offices. Internal co-ordination mechanisms help to maximize efforts towards the development of gender-sensitive programmes and activities and contribute to shared ownership of gender mainstreaming within an executive structure.

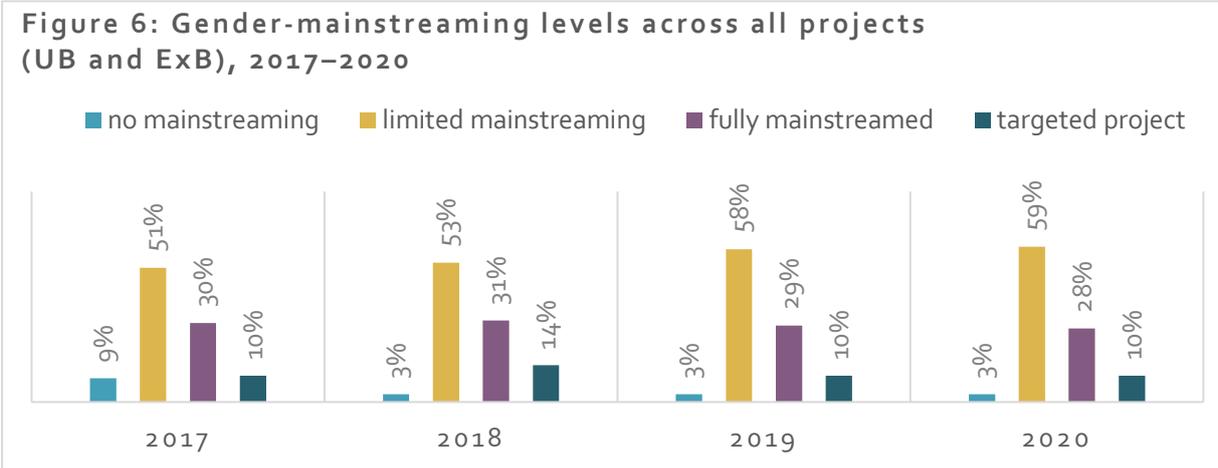
In 2020, 12 field operations and the three institutions had a gender action plan in place. Secretariat departments reviewed the implementation of the Secretariat Road Map for 2018–2020 and based on progress, gaps and challenges, developed new work plans, which in turn shaped the 2021–2023 Secretariat Road Map. Gender action plans and implementation strategies are a catalyst for progress towards gender mainstreaming and an effective framework for tracking advancements in the implementation of the GAP.

2. MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO OSCE ACTIVITIES, POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Progress in mainstreaming gender concerns in all OSCE activities remained uneven in 2020. As the Organization recognizes the need to increase the share of activities, projects and programmes that integrate a gender perspective, the Gender Issues Programme has taken steps to further systematize and standardize capacity-building for gender mainstreaming across all executive structures. Efforts (initiated in 2018) to gender-balance OSCE and OSCE-related meetings showed their first results in 2020 with the overall gender gap in speakers decreasing by 10 percentage points.

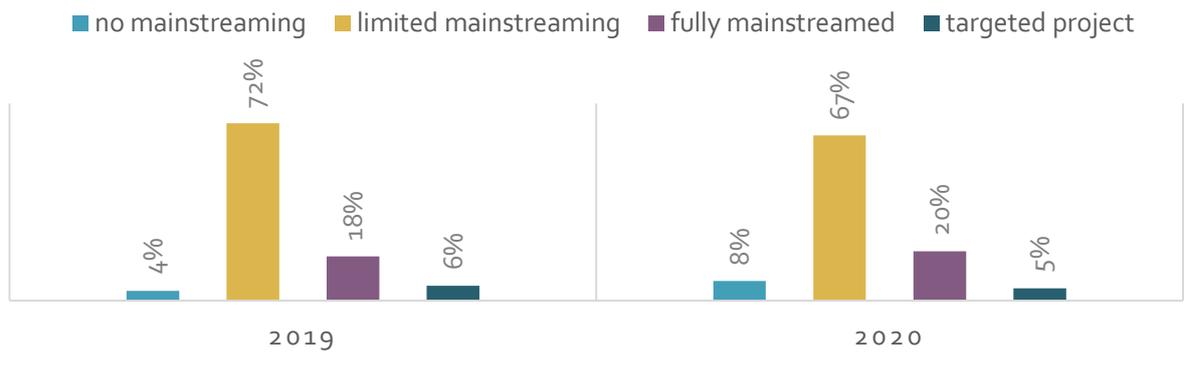
2.1 LEVELS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN OSCE ACTIVITIES

The extent of gender mainstreaming in OSCE projects (both UB- and ExB-funded) has remained stable in the last two years. A comparison of the 2019 and 2020 data shows a minor shift of 1 percentage point from fully mainstreamed projects to projects that only take some gender equality considerations into account.



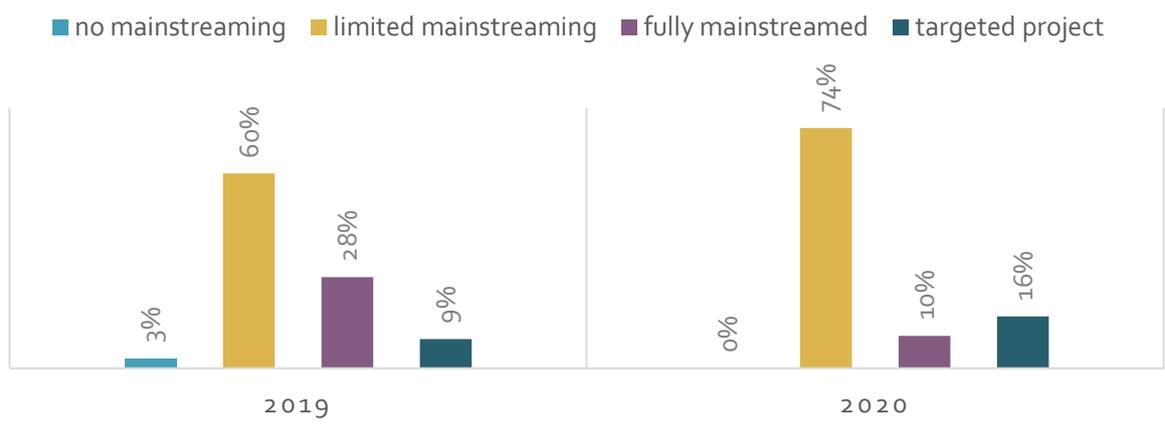
The charts below show how the Organization has evolved since 2019 in terms of integrating a gender perspective into its programmatic activities in each security dimension. The politico-military dimension saw a slight regression in its gender-mainstreaming levels, as more activities did not include any gender considerations at all (plus 4 percentage points), fewer projects had a limited gender component (minus 5 percentage points) or were targeted gender equality projects (minus 1 percentage point). A slight improvement was registered in terms of projects that were fully gender-mainstreamed, which increased by 2 percentage points (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Gender-mainstreaming levels in the politico-military dimension (UB and ExB), 2019 and 2020



In the economic and environmental dimension, the share of activities that were not gender-mainstreamed at all fell to 0 per cent. More projects had limited gender mainstreaming (plus 14 percentage points) than in 2019. The fact that fewer projects were fully mainstreamed in 2020 (minus 18 percentage point) was only partially offset by an increase in projects fully targeting gender equality (plus 7 percentage points).

Figure 8: Gender-mainstreaming levels in the economic and environmental dimension (UB and ExB), 2019 and 2020



Projects in the human dimension and cross-dimensional projects have the highest levels of gender mainstreaming, with 51 per cent of all activities being fully mainstreamed or specific stand-alone gender projects (Figures 9 and 10). This confirms the trend from previous years.

Figure 9: Gender-mainstreaming levels in the human dimension (UB and ExB), 2019 and 2020

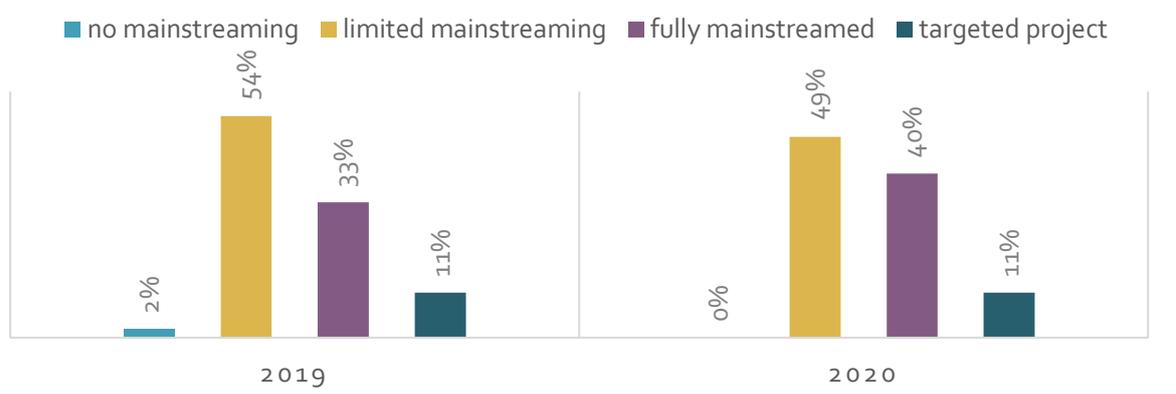


Figure 10: Gender-mainstreaming levels in cross-dimensional projects (UB and ExB), 2019 and 2020

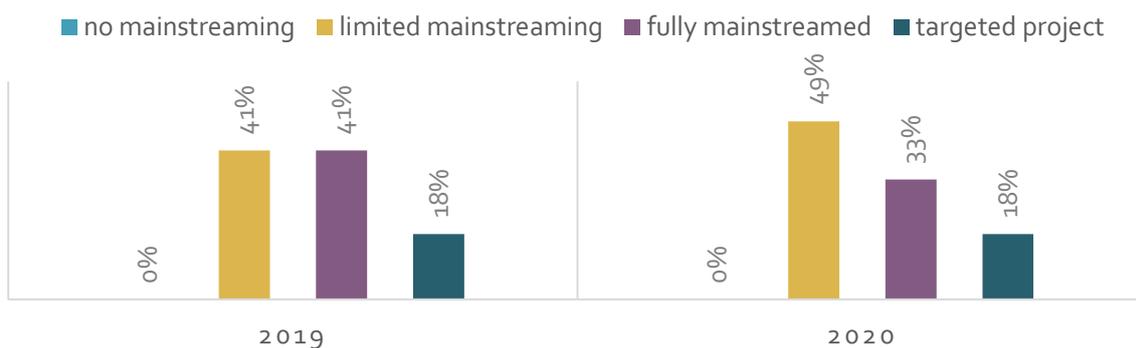
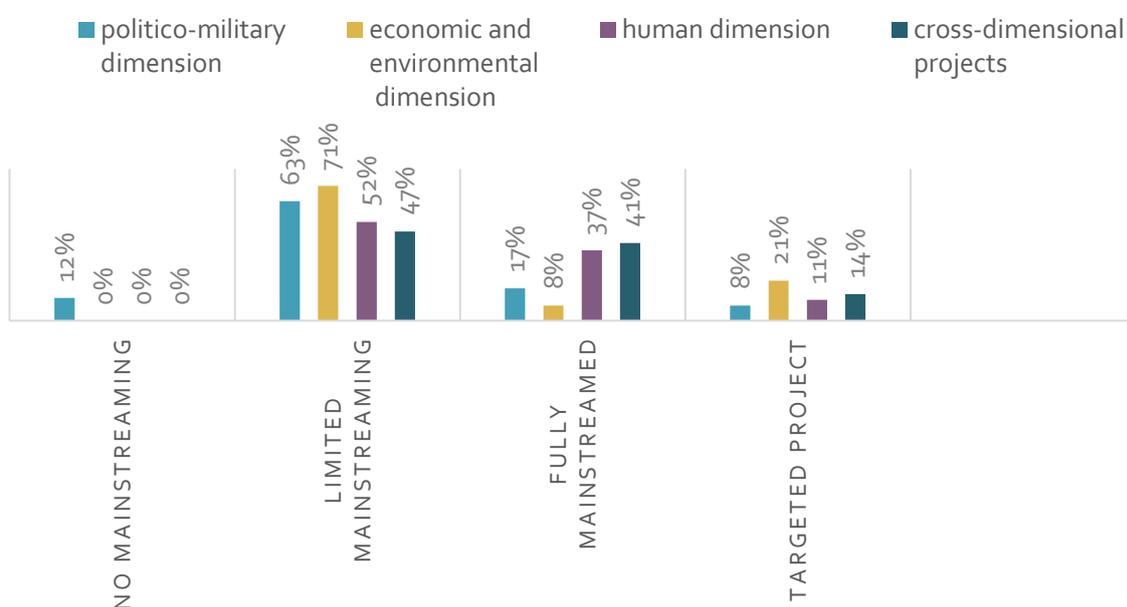


Figure 11: Comparison of gender-mainstreaming levels in ExB projects per security dimension, 2020



GFPs have highlighted the following factors as challenging progress in fully gender-mainstreaming programmes and projects:

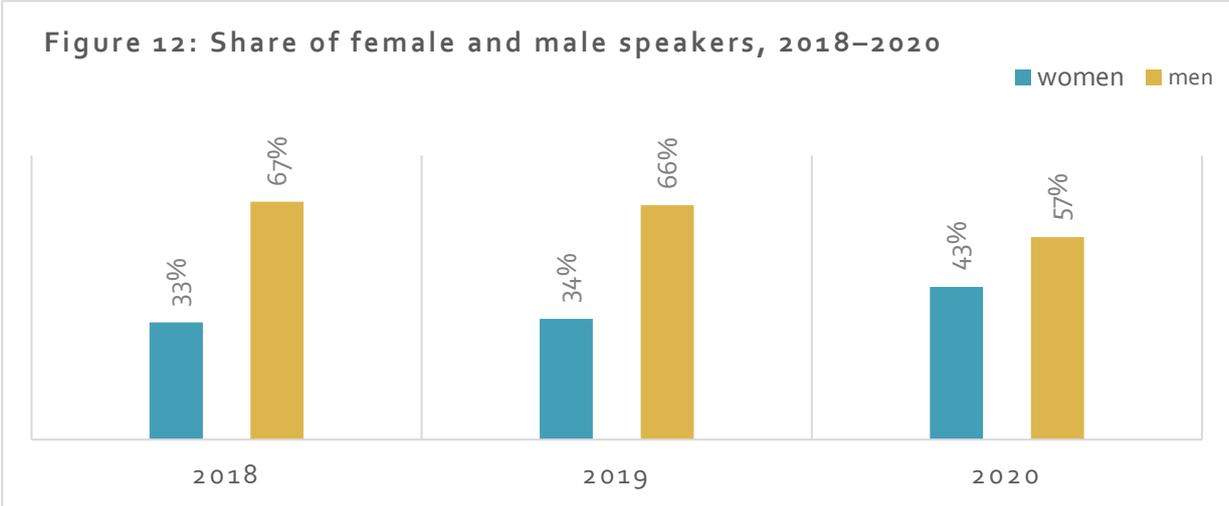
- lack of buy-in or resistance from the beneficiary to include gender considerations in the activity;
- difficulties in translating general theoretical concepts regarding gender mainstreaming into day-to-day work;
- lack of capacity and resources to carry out gender analyses in the context of a given project (from the needs assessment to the formulation of the log frame). The gender-mainstreaming effort usually only comes as an add-on at the end of project development and because it is a mandatory component in the project proposal template;
- a tendency to limit gender mainstreaming to sex disaggregation in participation. This is a reflection of the persistent gap in gender-mainstreaming skills among staff who develop projects.

The Gender Issues Programme took steps to remedy the skills gaps by conducting an Organization-wide capacity assessment in 2020. The findings from the assessment, which reached 1,401 respondents, will form the baseline for a comprehensive strategy to reinforce institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming, including staff training, and the development of related resources.

2.2 PROGRESS IN GENDER BALANCE IN OSCE AND OSCE-RELATED EVENTS

Since 2018, the Secretariat’s Gender Issues Programme has been tracking the gender balance in panels at OSCE conferences and meetings and has developed recommendations on how to improve the representation of women in such events. For the 2020 analysis, the Gender Issues Programme reviewed the agendas of 19 conferences and meetings held between 1 January and 31 December 2020, looking at a total of 156 panels (including the Permanent Council). These included OSCE meetings (based on an OSCE decision) and OSCE-related meetings (organized by the OSCE Chair-in-Office or an executive structure).

In 2020, the male representation among speakers remained higher than the female representation, although the gender imbalance was reduced by 18 percentage points.



The gender balance in representation varied according to the dimensions of security: Meetings and conferences related to the politico-military and economic and environmental dimensions had higher shares of male, than female, speakers (Figure 13). At the same time, the gender gap has been reduced in both dimensions from 42 percentage points to 8 percentage points and from 44 percentage points to 20 percentage points respectively, since 2018 (Figure 14). Women remained overrepresented on panels at human dimension events, where the gender gap in favour of women increased from 12 percentage points to 23 percentage points between 2018 and 2020.

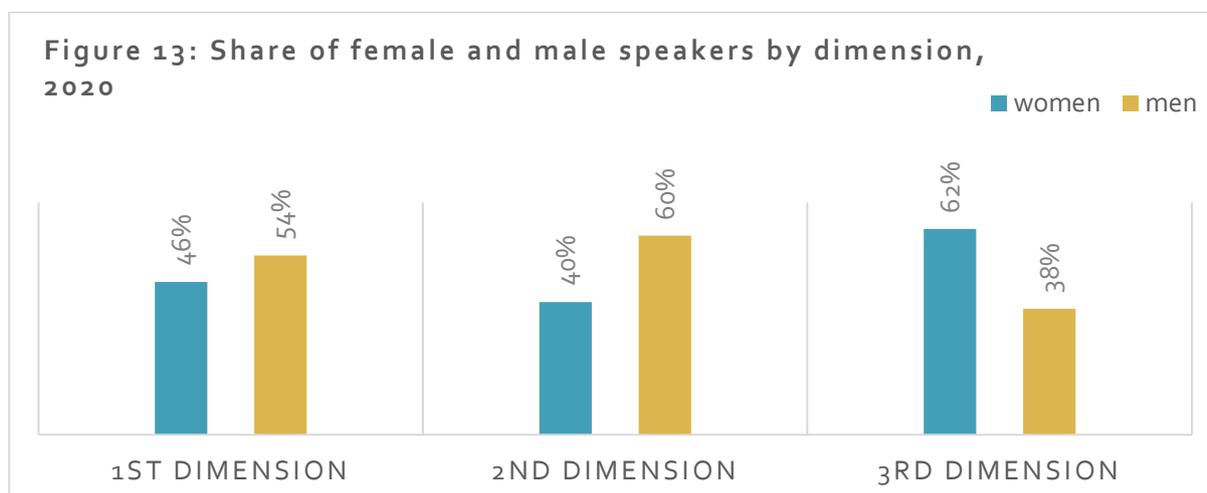


Figure 14: 2018 and 2020 comparison of gender balance among speakers by dimension



The leader in terms of fully gender-balancing their panels was the Asian Partnership for Co-operation Group, which had panel parity at their second and third meetings in 2020.

3. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN PARTICIPATING STATES

OSCE executive structures achieved a number of successes in 2020 in their respective programmatic areas to advance gender equality. This chapter presents examples of these successes at both the national level and for individual women who were empowered to take up a political career, start their own business or leave an abusive situation. Against the background of the coronavirus pandemic and its gendered impacts, OSCE executive structures adapted their work in promoting gender equality to new developments. Activities to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 on the security of women and girls included gender analyses to inform national policies related to COVID-19, hands-on support for organizations and institutions that help victims of domestic and gender-based violence and direct support for women-led initiatives and businesses.

3.1. ENSURING NON-DISCRIMINATORY LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In 2020, OSCE executive structures stepped up their efforts to support participating States in advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through legislation, policies and programmes.

A few participating States enacted new policies and laws relevant to gender equality that were developed with support from executive structures. In Serbia, the government adopted, in July 2020, a National Strategy on the Rights of Victims and Witnesses of Crime for the period 2020–2025, which had been drafted with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia. The Strategy recognizes the specific needs of children and women victims of sexual offences and domestic violence and stipulates how their needs should be met. To put these policy directions into practice, the Mission helped draft an action plan for the first two and a half years of the Strategy's implementation.

North Macedonia developed a new gender equality law and adopted, on 27 January 2021, a new law on gender-based and domestic violence. Both laws had been drafted with support from the OSCE Mission to Skopje. The Mission also drafted legal resources on gender-based violence jointly with the academy for judges and public prosecutors and supported the Helsinki Committee in providing free legal aid to victims of gender-based discrimination.

As the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro sought OSCE assistance for the preparation of a new strategy for gender equality, the Mission to Montenegro supported a virtual stakeholder consultation process and facilitated online focus group discussions on the state of gender equality in the country. The input from the consultations formed the basis of the draft strategy developed by the Ministry.

In Kyrgyzstan, Parliament adopted, in April 2020, new amendments to the Criminal Code introducing additional protective measures for victims of domestic violence. The amendments create new procedures for the accused to be detained by law enforcement for 48 hours while an investigation is initiated, thereby protecting victims of violence from further harm. The new provisions were drafted with expert support provided by the Programme Office in Bishkek, which had been also facilitated public discussions with relevant stakeholders. The amendments to the Criminal Code entered into force in May 2020.

ODIHR published 22 legal reviews, 21 of which specifically addressed gender and diversity considerations (compared with 12 of 19 legal reviews in 2019). In the reviews, ODIHR provided recommendations to participating States on how to ensure gender balance and greater diversity in the composition and work of their democratic institutions and to remove potentially discriminatory provisions affecting women and persons from underrepresented or marginalized groups.

TAKING STOCK AND CHARTING THE FUTURE – THE THIRD GENDER EQUALITY REVIEW CONFERENCE



The Third Gender Equality Review Conference (GERC) was held online – due to the pandemic – on 27–28 October 2020. Co-organized by the Albanian OSCE Chair-in-Office, ODIHR and the OSCE Secretariat, the event attracted 324 participants representing OSCE participating States and executive structures, international organizations, civil society and academia from across the OSCE area. Seventy-four per cent of the participants were women (240 women and 84 men), compared with 80 per cent at the Second Gender Equality Review Conference in 2017. Some 200 participants, on average, took part in the different sessions.

The Conference served as a platform for experts to discuss progress and challenges, share good practices and lessons learned, and identify recommendations for moving forward with the implementation of OSCE gender equality commitments in a changing political and economic global context.

In preparation for the event, the Gender Issues Programme produced [four discussion papers](#) on the state of implementation of OSCE commitments on gender equality in OSCE participating States. Based on secondary research and analysis, the papers provide a snapshot of achievements and challenges, and put forward good practices and recommendations in the areas of women's political participation; equal economic opportunities; women's participation in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction; and the prevention and fight against violence against women. In addition to informing the GERC debates, the papers' synthesis of remaining implementation gaps can be used as food for thought and a road map for further action by participating States and the Organization.

3.2. PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

OSCE engagement in the area of prevention of and response to gender-based violence remained strong in 2020. As a follow-up to the *OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women* in Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe, the Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme published a practical guide for lawmakers, decision makers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on how to use data from the survey. The survey results were used for advocacy – for example, in a publication by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on violence against women with disabilities – and were presented and discussed in parliaments – for example, in Serbia and North Macedonia – with a view to improving legal frameworks on gender-based violence. The Gender Issues Programme further organized three sub-regional expert meetings, which helped strengthen networking and the exchange of knowledge between experts working on violence against women in Central Asia and Mongolia, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe. The meetings, which gathered over 100 experts (80 per cent women), resulted in recommendations for the implementation of OSCE commitments on violence against women. The recommendations will be shared with key stakeholders, including other international organizations. They will also be used to inform OSCE programming on gender-based violence.

In Central Asia, OSCE field operations partnered with local NGOs and women's organizations to prevent and counter violence against women. The Programme Office in Nur-Sultan built the capacities of government bodies and civil society organizations to address trafficking in human beings and all forms of violence against women and girls. In close co-operation with 13 crisis centres for victims of domestic violence, a total of 3,594 beneficiaries received psychological, social and legal counselling in relation to their individual cases and circumstances. The Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan (PCUz) worked with a leading women's rights NGO, the Civic Initiatives Support Centre, to provide personalized support, free legal aid and psychological counselling to women in a difficult life situation. Key to the success of the activity was the development and implementation of an integrated case plan for each victim. Seven hundred forty-four women were assisted by the project, which enabled their introduction to support networks and funds, and helped reduce the women's sense of social isolation and psychological trauma. The PCUz and UNFPA's joint work in support of better co-ordination between the national Gender Equality Commission, hotline practitioners, lawyers and specialized police units produced its first results: Evidence-based data from NGO and police reports showed that the number of gender-based violence cases reported, registered and resolved by law enforcement had increased. The Centre in Ashgabat also joined forces with a local partner, the NGO Keyik Okara, to raise awareness of domestic violence, its prevention, as well as referral mechanisms available to potential victims in the context of three seminars held for young people and interested persons (38 women among 53 participants). The seminars also provided information about services available to assist victims during the COVID-19 situation.

In December 2020, the OSCE Mission to Serbia organized an expert discussion on dealing with witnesses and victims in war crimes cases with a special focus on witnesses and victims of crimes involving sexual and gender-based violence. In a two-day online discussion, experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina shared their experiences and best practices with lawyers participating in war crimes trials in Serbia. The discussion covered the psychosocial aspects of working with witnesses and victims of sexual violence in war crimes cases. As a result of the event, ten Serbian lawyers (five women and five men) improved their awareness and knowledge of the particularities of defending victims and witnesses of gender-based violence in the context of war crimes trials.

The year 2020 also saw the completion of a three-year project by the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine (PCU) that built the capacities of staff of the "102" hotline police call centres across the country. In 2020 alone, the PCU held 14 two-day offline training sessions in seven regions of Ukraine. Some 288 operators of the "102" hotline (61 per cent women and 39 per cent men) improved their skills and knowledge concerning domestic violence legislation, identification and communication with victims, and the effective handling of domestic violence cases.

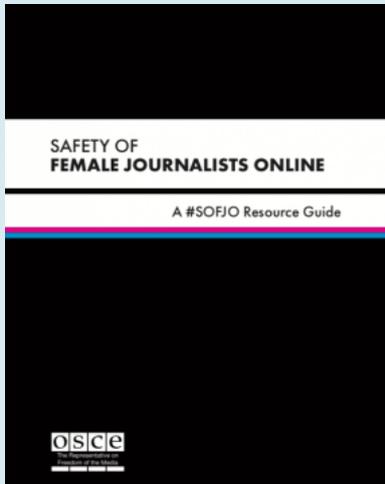
The OSCE Mission to Moldova carried out an innovative project to raise awareness among youth about the risks of human trafficking: It organized a 72-hour hackathon in November 2020 during which 36 young women and men from both banks of the Dniester/Nistru River designed tech-based solutions to prevent and combat human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children in Moldova. The event was the product of a partnership between the OSCE Mission and the local NGO Generația NIKA.

The Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings developed a paper on discouraging demand as one of the root causes of trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation disproportionately affects women and girls and is an egregious form of gender-based violence. The paper aims to raise the awareness of participating States of existing political commitments to address the demand that fosters all forms of trafficking, build the political will to further integrate related efforts into prevention activities and disseminate best practices from within the OSCE region to foster efforts aimed at addressing the demand that drives trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

In light of increased intolerance and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic, ODIHR organized training sessions in Belgium, the Czech Republic and Ireland for a total of 27 women and 42 men, from ministries, the judiciary, law enforcement, victim support agencies and civil society, to advance their practical skills on recording hate crimes and hate crime data collection, including on gender-based hate crimes.

Considering the exponential increase in domestic violence during periods of confinement or lockdown, many OSCE executive structures developed interventions in addition to their existing programmes to prevent and respond to violence against women. Those activities are described in Section 3.7.

#SOFJO GUIDELINES FOR THE ONLINE SAFETY OF WOMEN



The [publication](#) *Safety of Female Journalists Online: A #SOFJO Resource Guide* addresses gender-specific online abuse of journalists, in particular online attacks and harassment against women journalists. By providing comprehensive guidance on who should do what – and how – to improve the online safety of women journalists, the Resource Guide is helping decrease online violence against women journalists.

The Resource Guide is a 250-page compilation of resources and examples of good practices from across the OSCE region and beyond. It has been translated into Russian and Serbian.

The Resource Guide aims to assist states and non-state actors across the OSCE region to take concrete actions to improve the safety of female journalists online. The practices it presents are examples of how international standards and commitments can be realized. It advocates for a multi-stakeholder approach and provides key actors with an overview of the most relevant steps. Examples of best practices put in place by different actors in various countries illustrate each proposed action. Lastly, it includes a section on international human rights standards that, over the last decade, have increasingly called for a gender-responsive approach to the safety of journalists.

3.3 ENSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC LIFE

Increasing support for women’s organizations and women leaders from all groups of society was one of the recommendations contained in the 2020 “Special Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019)” that was taken up by many executive structures.

ODIHR launched an online self-assessment tool called “Gender Audit for Political Parties”, the first of its kind in the world. Gender audits recommend activities and examples of good practices that a party can undertake to better mainstream gender equality in its structures, programmes and documents. The online tool can be used by party leaders and activists to develop gender action plans and to outline measures for institutionalizing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the party and beyond. Since its launch in mid-2020, the online tool has had 198 users from 35 OSCE participating States.

ODIHR and local partners supported a door-to-door awareness-raising campaign and eight voter education training sessions delivered to Roma and Egyptian women in Albania. As a result, 80 young Roma and Egyptian women increased their knowledge about electoral processes and political participation.

ODIHR also partnered with the Programme Office in Bishkek and the Programme Office in Nur-Sultan to co-organize two cross-party capacity-building programmes for women wishing to pursue a career in politics. The courses focused on leadership, strategic planning, effective communication and public speaking skills, and they also introduced participants to international and national gender equality standards and frameworks. Following the courses, individual coaching sessions were provided for 38 women from Kyrgyzstan and 47 from Kazakhstan, who subsequently gave feedback about their increased readiness to run for office. The Programme Office in Nur-Sultan also considered the intersection of gender and disability and worked with the Public Association of Women with Disabilities Shyrak to train people with disabilities on electoral rights and political participation. Seven out of the 16 training participants took part in the Nur Otan primaries in 2020; four of them (two women and two men) were elected to *maslikhats* (local representative bodies) following elections held in early 2021.

The OSCE Mission in Kosovo sustained its support for the work of the women’s caucus in the Assembly of Kosovo¹ by co-organizing their meetings, supporting them in the development of their Gender Action Plan and building their capacity on issues related to violence against women and domestic violence. In September 2020, the women’s caucus successfully lobbied for a constitutional amendment to recognize the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). At the municipal level, the Mission trained municipal staff and local women’s caucuses in six municipalities in gender-responsive budgeting. The training provided practical examples of how to effectively use gender-responsive budgeting as a tool to advance gender equality at the municipal level. Given the positive evaluation of the training, the Mission will expand it to other municipalities in 2021.

In North Macedonia, the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men adopted a Plan for a Gender-Sensitive Assembly 2020–2021 in January 2020. As part of its implementation, the OSCE Mission to Skopje provided advanced training for the Parliamentary Institute and for Committee support staff on gender equality and non-discrimination. The training resulted in the Parliamentary Institute developing and delivering an orientation programme on gender equality for new members of parliament (MPs). Additionally, the Mission and the Parliamentary Institute published a handbook on gender equality for MPs and parliamentary staff.

In Georgia, a 50 per cent gender quota for political party lists for local elections and a 25 per cent quota for national elections were introduced in 2020. The High Commissioner on National Minorities

¹ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

contributed to this change by engaging in different forums and activities promoting women's political participation, including by implementing an internship programme for youth in political parties and related activities also targeting minority women.

CAREER PATH OF AN ALUMNA OF THE ACADEMY IN BISHKEK

Regina Sokolova is an alumna of the Academy in Bishkek's 2014 Politics and Security Programme. She started her professional career as an intern in the Gender and Anti-trafficking Unit of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe. Her MA thesis on gender politics in Tajikistan was informed by her grass-roots experience in the field and was based on stories of women's lives in rural Tajikistan. She was soon employed by the Office's Counterterrorism and Police Reform Unit, where she was involved in a nationwide awareness-raising campaign on police reform.

Through the OSCE Academy's partnership network, she was given her next academic opportunity and defended her second MA thesis on the role of women in terrorism at the University of Geneva in 2015. In 2018, Regina travelled to the United Kingdom as a John Smith Trust Fellow to learn about best practices in good governance and social justice. Upon her return, she worked on an action plan to empower women and girls in rural areas and ran several social campaigns, as well as a project entitled "Man metavonam" ("I can"), which highlights activities and jobs that people with disabilities can do, and the value they bring to society. In 2019, the organizers of the One Young World Summit invited Regina to represent Tajikistan among 2,000 young leaders from 190 countries.

Regina credits the Academy as a catalyst for her career aspirations: **"I am [forever] grateful to the OSCE Academy for helping to determine my research interests, which matched my professional endeavours."**

3.4. ENCOURAGING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT PREVENTION, CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

As suggested in the 2020 "Special Report on the Implementation of the 2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2017-2019)", OSCE executive structures have maintained their focus on women, peace and security (WPS) and enhanced their own capacities to assist participating States with the implementation of their WPS-related commitments. This included the creation of an Advisory Group on Women, Peace and Security made up of experts from OSCE executive structures. Its members are currently developing strategic guidelines on how to promote the WPS agenda in OSCE participating States. In addition, and based on its Gender and Security Toolkit, ODIHR has trained staff in field operations to integrate a gender perspective in their assistance to the national security sector.

With a study called *Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region*, the Gender Issues Programme created a base of evidence on the implementation of the WPS agenda in the OSCE region. The study, which identifies implementation gaps and includes recommendations, has been published in Bosnian, Croatian, English, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian. Another initiative to increase understanding of how to effectively address the implementation gaps in the WPS agenda was the organization of three expert round-table meetings for participants in Central Asia, Eastern

Europe and South-Eastern Europe. A fourth round-table meeting was held upon a request from Uzbekistan to support the development of the country's first WPS national action plan.

As a contribution to the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the CPC partnered with the UN and the EU in developing an internal WPS strategy for the Geneva International Discussions. The strategy has already contributed to increased outreach to civil society groups and focused the discussion concerning inclusivity aspects in the approach of the co-chair teams for the Geneva International Discussions.

BORDER MANAGEMENT STAFF COLLEGE IN DUSHANBE: TRAINING FEMALE LEADERS IN THE SECURITY SECTOR

Since 2014, the Border Management Staff College (BMSC) has held staff courses for women leaders to support female officers in advancing their career in the border service.

Lieutenant Colonel Z. G. is from the border service at Carthage Airport, Tunisia (a Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation), and is a graduate of the BMSC. She recaps how the BMSC training changed her management style: "I am pleased to say that I have 180 agents in my unit, and it was difficult to deal with them before. After additional sessions on management and leadership, screening persons, luggage and vehicles, and Kg practical exercises at the Tajik–Afghan border, I made corrections to my managerial behaviour as a leader of the unit and came up with new ways of managing my team [...]. I now try to use their character to build an even stronger team and motivate them in the right direction. We [have] achieved success because of my additional knowledge received during the course, such as motivation of agents and co-operation between customs, police officers, border agents and Kg."

After completing the staff course, Z. G. was promoted from national to international trainer and from Captain to Commander; after completing the staff course for women leaders, she was further promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

Together with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) and UN Women, ODIHR organized a series of public webinars based on the [Gender and Security Toolkit](#), with the aim of generating awareness of good practices to apply a gender lens to security while tackling topical issues such as emergency measures and the public health crisis, police violence and intersectionality, conflict, transitional justice and gender. Over 500 beneficiaries from security sector institutions, civil society organizations and international organizations have thus acquired knowledge of evidence-based practices for integrating a gender perspective into security, specifically regarding policing, border management, justice and the defence sector, in six online multi-stakeholder events. In addition, knowledge of the policy links between the WPS agenda and security sector governance and reform was shared by [ODIHR and its partners, DCAF and UN Women](#), through a dedicated policy brief in Bosnian, Croatian, English, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Russian and Serbian.

In Serbia, the OSCE Mission also promoted gender mainstreaming in the security sector at the local level, focusing on rural women and their associations in three municipalities in the Middle Banat region. Targeting community influencers in south-western Serbia and in co-operation with the

Swedish Embassy in Belgrade, the Gender Knowledge Hub and the Centre for Ethics, Law and Applied Philosophy, the Mission organized a series of sessions with 18 local leaders (12 women) and 30 educators (20 women) in Novi Pazar. The sessions focused on issues such as incorporating gender equality into teaching practices, ODIHR's political party gender audit tool, best practices in bringing UNSCR 1325 national action plans to the local level and changing the institutional culture in the security sector towards more diversity. Gender-responsive budgeting as a key institutional mechanism was also discussed. During the Novi Pazar City Assembly session held on 21–22 December 2020, a decision was adopted requiring greater participation of women in the work of the city administration: 30 per cent of the city council members must be women, and 30 per cent of the heads of the city administration department must be women.

As part of its activities to promote a gender perspective in water governance and water diplomacy, the OCEEA produced a manual called *Gender Mainstreaming in Water Governance in Central Asia* for the benefit of water practitioners in the region. The manual contains step-by-step guidance for the gender mainstreaming of water governance. The OCEEA also started developing an e-learning course that is based on the guidance material.

A NEW CAREER OPPORTUNITY THROUGH OSCE TRAINING

Captain of Justice Inna Zavorotko from the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces is one of ten trainers trained in equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the Ukrainian Armed Forces by the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. The training experience that she gained encouraged her to take the next step in her career: She applied and won a competition to become a military staff officer from the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Captain Zavorotko mentioned that it was her participation in the PCU's training project that inspired her to follow this career path.

3.5. PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the urgency for enhanced efforts to give women greater access to and control over economic resources, and several executive structures have placed emphasis on the economic empowerment of women, either by providing direct support to women-led businesses or by supporting women's networks and civil society organizations (also see Section 3.7).

The OCEEA has expanded its support to women in vulnerable situations through the network of Women's Resource Centres (WRCs) in Armenia. It has improved the financial sustainability of the WRCs by supporting them in their adoption of a social enterprise business model. In the framework of recently adopted local government development plans, it has also supported the WRCs' engagement with local authorities towards more effective measures to ensure the economic participation of women. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many economic empowerment activities had to be adapted in terms of format and focus: 14 online coaching sessions were held to enhance the WRCs' capacities in establishing and improving social enterprises in light of the economic and social challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to support the reorientation and adaptation of business models to the new circumstances.

Examples of direct support for female entrepreneurs include activities by the Programme Office in Dushanbe, the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and the Programme Office in Bishkek. In Tajikistan, in co-operation with the State Agency on Social Protection, Employment and Migration, the

Programme Office in Dushanbe completed a series of three-month training courses for 56 women in the Ayni, Shamsiddin Shohin and Temurmalik districts of the country. The women acquired skills in sewing and enhanced their knowledge of labour rights, entrepreneurship and the Russian language. The graduates were awarded internationally recognized certificates on sewing skills.

A good example of a successful partnership with the private sector for the benefit of women's economic empowerment is the Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan's work with *Coozin*, a start-up that helps female-owned small culinary businesses operate online. Coozin developed a user-friendly mobile phone application that helps women entrepreneurs reach out to potential customers by making their food offers searchable around their neighbourhoods. Coozin supports them by processing on- and offline financial transactions and providing delivery services. The development of the application was coupled with the provision of professional culinary training courses and digitalization webinars for women willing to start their own culinary business. Since its launch, some 60 women have benefited from the Coozin platform. A follow-up project to further enhance the scope of the activity is being funded by the Coca-Cola Foundation with a view to engaging more than 600 women in self-employment via this digital platform.

In Kyrgyzstan – building on knowledge acquired during earlier capacity-building initiatives by the Programme Office in Bishkek (POiB) – 24 women from the Batken province were coached by the POiB-supported Entrepreneurship Support Centre (ESC) in Batken in preparing business plans that included a budget, a marketing plan and a business sustainability strategy. As a result, the women entrepreneurs were provided with in-kind grants to launch their businesses. The companies founded by the women include agricultural product processing, an education centre, sewing shops, pastry shops, greenhouse development, carpet weaving and a beauty salon. The ESC consultants will continue mentoring and coaching the women entrepreneurs to ensure the sustainability of their businesses. The POiB and the ESC will also keep track of their businesses and use the data for the development of similar initiatives in other provinces of Kyrgyzstan.

3.6. BUILDING NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

OSCE executive structures have contributed to strengthening national mechanisms for the advancement of women by building institutional capacities in several areas relevant to attaining gender equality. For example, the Transnational Threats Department and the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat have built the capacities of government agencies to develop age- and gender-sensitive criminal justice responses to terrorism. In an online seminar, practitioners (10 women and 14 men) were introduced to such responses in the context of rehabilitating and reintegrating women and children associated with foreign terrorist fighters. The event served as a pilot to explore interest in the issue and is going to be replicated in other countries in 2021.

The Programme Office in Dushanbe promoted women's participation in environmental education and environmentally friendly behaviour, which was discussed during a national conference devoted to a review of the implementation of the State Environmental Education Programme for 2015–2020 held in partnership with the Committee on Environmental Protection. Considering the recommendations issued during the conference, the new State Environmental Education Programme for 2021–2025 – developed with the POiD's support – includes a section on gender and environmental education. It stipulates directions for the enhancement of women's environmental education and their further involvement in decision-making processes.

National human rights institutions (NHRIs) in the OSCE region received support related to their oversight role in a public emergency. ODIHR produced a reference tool, which provides

recommendations on, among other things, integrating a gender perspective while scrutinizing emergency measures, scaling up support to various groups of the population including women victims of gender-based violence and overseeing the role of security sector institutions in emergencies. Upon publication of the tool, ODIHR, with the support of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, advanced the skills and capacities of staff from 32 NHRIs from the OSCE region.

In Ukraine, the Project Co-ordinator helped the National School of Judges of Ukraine to expand its network of gender focal points among judges. The PCU held induction training for 18 new members (ten women and eight men) and provided coaching support to them. The network members, for their part, shared the knowledge they acquired with their peers and acted as focal points for their colleagues and court visitors regarding gender equality issues. Seventy-seven per cent of the trained judges started applying their new knowledge and started reviewing cases related to domestic violence more carefully. They also included a gender equality principle while reviewing family-related cases, applied the relevant non-discrimination case law of the European Court of Human Rights, started using gender-sensitive language in court communication and in court judgments, and changed their approaches to personnel selection and the organization of the work of court staff.

The Presence in Albania assisted the Alliance of Women Parliamentarians and the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women with the finalization of their Gender Action Programme for a Gender-Sensitive Parliament. The document was approved by the Conference of Chairpersons on 29 June 2020, and its main elements were incorporated into the Assembly's Strategic Plan, which sets specific objectives for Parliament. The programme will serve as a framework document for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the Assembly's legislative and oversight process and thus contribute to the removal of barriers to women's full participation in society.

BALANCING REPRESENTATION IN OSCE ACTIVITIES

The gender balance in OSCE activities can vary significantly, depending on the topic of the activity. The Transnational Threats Department (TNTD), for example, noted limited attendance by women in its training programmes related to countering the financing of terrorism (CFT), an area where women continue to be underrepresented. Conversely, women account for the vast majority of interest in the Department's portfolio related to preventing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. To improve the gender balance in both areas, the TNTD has been proactive in reaching out to the respective underrepresented group to encourage participation in its activities. A successful example of these efforts can be seen in Kyrgyzstan, where TNTD worked with the authorities to appoint national focal points who helped with the nomination of female participants to attend training on CFT. As a result, the gender balance in these events improved significantly. Good results were also achieved in Albania and Kazakhstan, where TNTD worked with national trainers to develop a strong female national cadre in the area of CFT.

More generally, the pandemic created new challenges for women to participate in OSCE activities in 2020. This could be partly addressed by carefully assessing the timing and format of activities to ensure that they did not collide with schooling hours or care obligations and by facilitating access to information, activities and interventions.

3.7. MITIGATING THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The outbreak of COVID-19 has exacerbated gender inequalities by aggravating existing economic disparities, increasing women's exposure to gender-based violence and negatively impacting the socio-economic well-being of women who belong to disadvantaged groups. OSCE executive structures responded quickly and aligned their work and priorities around gender equality by undertaking analysis and working with participating States to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women.

Research and policy advice

The Secretariat's Gender Issues Programme quickly recognized the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's rights and the increase in violence against women, in particular domestic violence, as a result of lockdown measures. To raise awareness of these issues, and to share approaches, two dedicated webinars for OSCE staff and representatives of participating States were organized in April and May 2020. The Programme also issued a [joint paper](#) with TNTD's Strategic Police Matters Unit on domestic violence and the COVID-19 crisis. The paper highlights trends, measures and good practices in OSCE participating States, and provides recommendations and information about potential areas where the OSCE could provide assistance.

The OSCE PA also held a webinar entitled "The Gender Impacts of COVID-19", hosted by Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry. This was accompanied by the publication of a report on the gendered impact of COVID-19. The report found that personal confinement and physical distancing increase gender-based violence and that job losses relating to measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 make certain groups more susceptible to human trafficking. It also highlighted the difficulties that victims of gender-based violence encounter in accessing vital services due to the pandemic.

ODIHR prepared a series of guidance documents, including a comprehensive report called *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments and State Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic*. It features, among other things, a section dedicated to gender inequality and domestic violence and brings in state practice from the 57 OSCE participating States. In the report, ODIHR devotes special attention to the ways in which discrimination and hate crimes affect men and women differently in the context of the pandemic. ODIHR also published a guidance manual called [Human Rights and Gender Equality during Public Emergencies](#) for state institutions and civil society, focusing on how women are impacted by restrictions to fundamental freedoms and human rights during public emergencies. Together with UN Women, ODIHR prepared a report called *Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, which highlights the continued vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking. Other ODIHR publications include a paper called *Alternative Voting Methods and Arrangements* and a primer called *The Functioning of Courts in the Covid-19 Pandemic*. All ODIHR resources were promoted during online events and training sessions and in direct contacts with institutions and civil society in the participating States to provide practical solutions for the development of gendered responses to the pandemic.

The field operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia supported their respective host countries with gender analyses of the COVID-19 emergency response. The findings of their research not only inform national policies but also form the basis of their further planning and work around gender equality.

Helping victims of domestic violence

In addition to supporting governments to include measures to protect women from violence, expanding the capacity of shelters for victims of violence was an important part of executive

structures' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Field operations in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe provided capacity-building, protective equipment, supplies and financial support to shelters for victims of domestic violence, women's networks, providers of psychosocial assistance and legal aid, helplines and in some cases front-line medical staff. Overall, an estimated number of at least 8,000 women and their children benefited from the OSCE's practical assistance during the pandemic.

Economic empowerment

For many women in the OSCE area, the pandemic resulted in economic exclusion, job loss and increased home-care obligations. A number of OSCE executive structures therefore focused their interventions on dealing with the immediate and long-term economic toll on women, be it at the policy level or through direct livelihood support. The OCEEA, for example, updated its *Best-Practice Guide for a Positive Business and Investment Climate*, initially published in 2006, to include a gender perspective on the recommended post-COVID-19 economic recovery measures. The Guide includes a chapter that specifically deals with gender-sensitive reforms to boost a strong business and investment climate.

The OSCE Mission to Serbia supported several studies related to women's entrepreneurship against the background of the pandemic. In partnership with the European Movement in Serbia, the Mission also organized a three-part online interactive training course for 30 women entrepreneurs, covering financial planning, marketing management with an emphasis on digital marketing, human resources and strategies to revitalize business plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the Aarhus Centres, it organized five online public debates on challenges and opportunities for economic recovery and empowerment of female entrepreneurs through circular economy initiatives. Speakers included female entrepreneurs who manage organic food production and waste recycling businesses. The conclusions developed through the e-public discussions were shared with the Chamber of Commerce and local authorities and used for follow-up activities aimed at strengthening the engagement of women in business models that employ the principles of a circular economy.

HELPING WOMEN-OWNED ENTERPRISES EXPAND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In 2020, Aigul Asakeeva, owner of the Dastorkon café in Karakol, in the Issyk-Kul province of Kyrgyzstan, received counselling from the OSCE-supported Entrepreneurship Support Centre (ESC) for the promotion of her business online and through social media platforms. Following an assessment of her enterprise's strengths and weaknesses, its management, the quality of services and some market research, she developed a new business development plan with the ESC's support. In addition, her staff learned how to conduct efficient online sales. After six months of her work with the ESC, the number of walk-in clients and online orders increased significantly. The engagement rate on social media platforms increased by 40 per cent; the customer flow increased by 30 per cent and brand awareness by 60 per cent; online orders went up too, and new delivery methods were developed. In September 2020, the café expanded and opened a summer hall.

Since 2018, four ESC branches have been established in the Batken, Djalal-Abad Issyk-Kul and Osh provinces of Kyrgyzstan with the support of the Programme Office in Bishkek.

Women, peace and security

As the implementation of UNSCR 1325 has remained a priority during the pandemic, OSCE executive structures have worked towards ensuring that women's participation and leadership are part of all responses related to peace and security. As part of its "Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality" (WIN) project, the Gender Issues Programme supported the regional women peacebuilders network of women CSO (civil society organization) leaders from the Baltic states, Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus to strengthen their outreach and advocacy. Against the background of the pandemic, WIN facilitated an exchange of views between the network members and representatives from the international community about specific issues and challenges for women caused by the COVID-19 pandemic response measures in their countries. ODIHR conducting regular meetings with the Civic Solidarity Platform's Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Region with the aim of maintaining regular communication with civil society organizations working on gender equality and the WPS agenda.

Field operations have also initiated analysis and public discussions on the implications of COVID-19 on the WPS agenda. Working on promoting the implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the local level, the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the Civil Society Network 1325, for example, undertook an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the WPS agenda at the local level and more specifically in the municipalities of Ada, Kraljevo, Leskovac and Vladičin Han. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo helped the women's caucus of the Kosovo Assembly, local women's groups and the network of women in government to organize discussions about their role in the COVID-19 response. The Mission also supported media campaigns featuring prominent women to strengthen female voices in crisis prevention and the overall COVID-19 response.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Partnerships are essential for the attainment of gender equality, and the Organization continued to join forces with others to accelerate the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality. The implementation of a memorandum of understanding with UN Women was strengthened through joint activities and events, such as a high-level event on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, which provided practical proposals for future action.

In 2020, many partnerships derived from the need to pool expertise and resources to better support women during the COVID-19 crisis. OSCE executive structures co-operated with national institutions, international organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's networks. The Programme Office in Nur-Sultan relied on an extensive network of CSOs and collaborated with 13 NGOs throughout the country in the framework of activities to combat gender-based violence, promote human rights and mainstream gender.

Against the background of the pandemic, a new focus was placed on co-operation with health institutions. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the UNFPA, for example, worked with the Institute for Forensic Medicine (IFM) of Kosovo on a brochure on improving healthcare providers' response to domestic violence cases. The brochure offers practical tools for healthcare professionals to assess the risk of domestic violence, including for referral, support for survivors and the collection of evidence. The Mission, the UNFPA and the IFM will continue to support healthcare professionals with focused capacity-building programmes in 2021.

Co-ordination with other international and national players was also important to make sure that support for women is complementary. The Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, reported about increased efforts to that effect and deepened its co-operation with UN Women, the EU and embassies of participating States to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The SMM established a new referral mechanism through which cases of persons or communities in humanitarian need or cases of alleged human rights violations, including gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings, are referred to mandated organizations such as the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UNFPA.

Partnerships were also sought for the implementation of capacity-building activities. For instance, the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine developed a strategic partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance and the Folke Bernadotte Academy in the area of gender equality in the defence sector. Both institutions supported the PCU's training of trainers on gender equality in the armed forces. In the economic and environmental dimension, the OCEEA's partnership with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia in the framework of the project "Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention - Phase II" helped increase the capacity of water professionals in gender mainstreaming in water governance and increased awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the water sector in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

4. VISIBILITY AND COMMUNICATION

A high number of OSCE executive structures implemented activities addressing gender inequality through communication and advocacy. Given the spikes in domestic violence reported across the OSCE area, gender-based violence was the most frequent topic of communication. The related communication projects were either aimed at raising public awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence in society or informing victims about where to find assistance, and they included online, traditional media and poster campaigns.

Three examples of the level of interest that the OSCE attracted during the reporting period are outlined below.

A communication campaign to mark the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was organized from 20 to 31 October 2020 and run by the Secretariat's Communication and Media Relations Section, the Gender Issues Programme and the OSCE Chairpersonship. The campaign showcased the OSCE's achievements in promoting the WPS agenda and highlighted the Organization's contribution to global efforts to advance implementation of UNSCR 1325. The social media posts that drew most of the public's attention were those presenting OSCE publications such as the *OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women and Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism*. A video demonstrating how the OSCE promotes women's leadership and empowers female professionals in conflict prevention and conflict management, peace processes, arms control and disarmament, and the security sector resulted in almost 12,000 views and about 7,700 engagements. The campaign, which was run on LinkedIn, Facebook and the OSCE's Twitter account in Russian, reached more than 150,000 users.

The February 2020 launch in Tirana of an OSCE study on the implementation of the global WPS agenda in the OSCE had some 9,000 impressions and more than 130 engagements on the OSCE’s Twitter account in English, and 2,790 impressions and more than 30 engagements on its Russian-language version.

In 2020, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign focused on violence against women in conflict. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the long-lasting effects of gender-based violence on survivors of conflict. Three short videos showed testimonies of survivors of gender-based violence in conflict based on the OSCE-led Survey on Violence against Women. They generated more than 11,000 views on social media.

Social media visibility data from the 16 Days campaign in 2020

	Facebook (5 posts)	LinkedIn (5 posts)
Impressions	32,501	40,343
Number of people reached	30,406	N/A
Video views	4,178	7,133
Likes, comments, shares and clicks	1,225	913

2020 OSCE publications that promote gender equality



A selection of reports and manuals promoting gender equality published by OSCE executive structures in 2020. The topics cover all three dimensions of security. A few publications were dedicated to the implications of the coronavirus pandemic for women and girls.