

Expert Meeting

Transforming Politics:

Male Politicians as Critical Actors for Gender Equality in Politics and Eliminating Violence against Women

Hotel Novotel Sarajevo Bristol, Sarajevo, 5-6 June 2024

Organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) & OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with support of the OSCE field operations in South-East Europe

BACKGROUND

Women's political participation has been continuously expanding over the last three decades. Women's presence in national parliaments in the OSCE space – North America, Europe and Central Asia - has reached a record high with 31.5% at the end of 2023. The picture gets more complex, when looking into the women's representation in governments, local governance councils or at the level of municipal and city mayors, as there are no trends that can be generalised for the entire OSCE space. Overall, even though we have witnessed progress, the OSCE space is far away from reaching gender-balanced representation. Men are significantly over-represented in all major legislative and executive bodies, and especially in the positions of party leaders, parliamentary speakers, heads of governments, heads of state and as mayors. Political and elected offices are still too often seen as a 'men's issue', while advancing gender equality policy remains predominantly a 'women's issue', left to women politicians and often without meaningful engagement of male politicians.

The issue on engaging men for gender equality is not new to the OSCE, its institutions and field operations. In fact, for longer than a decade, OSCE executive structures have been looking into the theory and practice, developing and implementing policy guidelines and projects, all aimed at promoting the importance of involving men alongside women to move forward in achieving gender equality. The last OSCE-wide event was the conference '[Women and Men: working together for equal rights](#)', held in on 6 December 2023 in Warsaw. Some of those OSCE initiatives produced long-lasting products, like the 2011 technical paper [Mending Inequalities: Men and Gender Equality in the OSCE Region](#) and the 2022 [Engaging Men in Gender Equality at the OSCE: A Toolkit for OSCE Staff](#).

This Expert Meeting is following up to these developments, taking the needed next step and putting a focus on sub-regional level in South-East Europe. While there is a strong and relevant track-record on engaging men on gender equality in diverse areas of social life, including on preventing and addressing violence against women, there have been limited targeted activities, which aim at **working with male politicians on advancing gender equality within politics, political parties and elected office overall**. NDI's *Men,*

Power and Politics global programme is a rare exception. Furthermore, there is a strong need for gender-responsive approaches to governance and decision making, where engaging male politicians is about the transformation of male power and privileges that come with political office and making space for women's leadership and representation. This Expert Meeting is filling this gap.

Furthermore, next to engaging male politicians on gender equality in politics, it is equally important to have them act on gender equality policy. In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the event's host country, given the horrific cases of femicide in 2023, and the efforts of the OSCE Mission to BiH to **tackle violence against women as a top priority, there is a growing need to engage political parties**, men and women in addressing violence against women, also as part of broader security discussions within local communities. Having this in mind, the Mission and OSCE/ODIHR have decided to dedicate two sessions within the regional event to discuss existing practices and ideas for tackling violence against women, including in politics, and on the correlation between violence against women and small arms and light weapons (SALW). As per data from [South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons](#) (SEESAC), 29 women were killed by firearms as a result of intimate partner violence in the period from 2019 to 2021. Prior record of domestic violence is rarely cited as grounds for rejecting firearm license applications or revoking licenses. Additionally, while the majority of firearm-related criminal offenses involve illegally-owned firearms, legally-owned firearms are more frequently misused in cases of homicide or domestic violence. The OSCE Mission to BiH and relevant decision-makers have committed to ensure timely temporary seizure of firearms in cases of domestic violence and to work on further improving legislation regulating the possession of firearms. This is among others done through the Mission's SALW project, which has gender-specific objectives and targets.

As a continuation of the Mission's efforts on securing an enhanced response to violence against women, including through co-operation with executive and legislative structures, as a side event to the Expert Meeting, on 4 June, the OSCE Mission to BiH will bring together political parties to agree on Principles for the Engagement of Political Parties in the Elimination of Violence against Women.

OSCE and international commitments on engaging men on gender equality

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the international human rights framework. With the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), State parties committed to eradicating discrimination in order to remove a primary obstacle to the participation of women on equal terms with men in political, social, economic and cultural life. While focused on spheres where women face discrimination, CEDAW also indicates that improving the situation for women alone will not bring about equality. Specifically, the Convention notes that "a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women", paving the way for later articulations of the role of men in gender equality work and calling not only for a gender-sensitive but also gender-transformative approach to gender equality advancement.

The role of men in advancing gender equality will be recognised also at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. As per the unanimously agreed Beijing Platform for Action, the UN member states expressed a determination to “encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality” and recognized that “women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world.”

The OSCE views gender equality as integral to peace, security and sustainable democracy, recognizing the benefits to both men and women and endorsing a gender mainstreaming approach. The importance of involving men alongside women to move forward in achieving gender equality is acknowledged in the OSCE Moscow Document (1991): “Full and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society.” The Ministerial Council Decisions 7/14 and 4/18, acknowledge the role of men in addressing violence against women and girls and encourage participating States to “take appropriate measures to increase the engagement and participation of men and boys in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence” (7/14). The MC.DEC 4/18 specifically recognizes the importance of actively engaging men and boys in efforts towards elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence and by raising awareness about the impact of negative attitudes, behaviours, and gender stereotypes that can underlie and perpetuate discrimination and violence.

EXPERT MEETING OBJECTIVES

The Expert Meeting aims at

- Facilitating exchange among male and female politicians, and representatives of women’s movements, civil society organisations, governmental gender equality bodies and international organizations, and raising awareness among existing practices, initiatives and programmes on engaging male politicians for gender equality in politics;
- Guiding individual participants in defining hands-on commitments for follow up actions, by which everyone will demonstrate concrete support to the ‘Engaging Men’ agenda and a gender-responsive transformation of politics;
- Contributing to the development of practical guidelines “OSCE/ODIHR Sarajevo Recommendations on Engaging Male Politicians as Critical Actors for Gender Equality in Politics” (working title), to be released after the Expert Meeting;
- Facilitating exchange of ideas and experiences in addressing violence against women, incl. on violence against women in politics and on the correlation between SALW possession and domestic violence;

EXPERT MEETING STRUCTURE & ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

The Expert Meeting, hosted by the OSCE Mission to BiH and OSCE/ODIHR, is organised as a two-day event, combining keynote lecture, panels and practical work on policy guidelines. The Expert Meeting is complemented with a BiH-focused side event, organised on the day before the regional event.

The Expert Meeting will bring together

- Male politicians, already active or interested in becoming a change agent around gender equality in politics;
- Female politicians, recognized as leaders for transformational approaches to gender equality in politics and ready to engage male colleagues;
- Male and female representatives of civil society and women's movements;
- Representatives of governmental bodies in charge for gender equality policy;
- Representatives of international organizations, working on engaging male politicians on gender quality in politics;

OSCE field operations from South-East Europe will facilitate the participation of OSCE mission members and a selected group of politicians, and representatives of civil society and governmental gender equality bodies. Next to the OSCE facilitated participants, ODIHR will facilitate the participation from international experts and open the event to participants from partner organisations, like UN Women, the National Democratic Institute and other international and bilateral political foundations/institutes/development agencies. The OSCE Mission to BiH will extend the invitation to a broader group of stakeholders in the country.

The working language of the Expert Meeting will be English, while interpretation will be provided into Albanian, Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian and Macedonian.

Event location:

[Hotel Novotel Sarajevo Bristol](#), Street Fra Filipa Lastrića bb, Sarajevo

ODIHR contact person for further communication:

Saša Gavrić, Gender Officer, OSCE/ODIHR

sasa.gavric@odhr.pl

AGENDA

Expert Meeting

Transforming Politics: Male Politicians as Critical Actors for Gender Equality in Politics and Eliminating Violence against Women

Hotel Novotel Sarajevo Bristol, Sarajevo, 5-6 June 2024

4 June 2024	
10:00-11:30	Side event by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina Consultations with parliamentary political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Principles for the engagement of political parties on combatting violence against women (<i>only based on invitation</i>)
19:00	Reception by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (<i>only based on invitation</i>)

5 June 2024	
9:00-9:30	Arrival, registration and welcoming coffee & tea
9:30-10:00	Opening remarks Thomas Busch, Deputy Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to BiH Yulia Netesova, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, ODIHR BiH authorities' representative
10:00-11:00	Opening panel discussion: Leading by example: Male politicians as critical actors for gender equality in politics Keynote speaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henrik Sølje Weiglin, Deputy Chairperson of the Conservative People's Party, Copenhagen • Saša Magazinović, MP, Parliamentary Assembly, Sarajevo • Rachel Weston Eschenbacher, Policy Specialist on Political Participation and Governance, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Istanbul Moderator: Paola Petrić, Head of Office, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Sarajevo Office
11:00-11:30	Group picture Break & networking

11:30-13:00	<p>Regional panel discussion: Lessons learned from South-East Europe (and beyond)</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belgrade • Podgorica • Prishtinë/Priština • Skopje • Tirana <p>Moderator: Saša Gavrić, Gender Officer, ODIHR</p>
13:00-14:00	Lunch & networking
14:00-15:00	<p>Keynote presentation & discussion: National Democratic Institute's <i>Men, Power and Politics</i> Programme</p> <p>Speaker: Sandra Pepera, NDI Director for Gender, Women and Democracy, Washington</p>
15:00-15:30	Break & networking
15:30-16:30	<p>Workshop: Role of male politicians in addressing all forms of violence against women including in politics</p> <p>Facilitator: Edita Miftari, Governance and Leadership Coordinator, UN Women Country Office in BiH & Sara Haapalainen, Gender Adviser, ODIHR</p>
16:30-17:15	<p>Presentation: OSCE efforts to decrease violence against women, including risk of firearms to women</p> <p>Input by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ermin Pešto, Ministry of Security, Chair of SALW CCB and the Ministry's Gender Equality Committee, Sarajevo • Andrei Sarban, SALW Project Manager, OSCE Mission to BiH • Elmaja Bavčić, Gender Adviser, OSCE Secretariat

6 June 2024	
9:00-9:30	Recap of day one
9:30-11:00	<p>Workshop: Sarajevo Recommendations on Engaging Male Politicians as Critical Actors for Gender Equality in Politics</p> <p>Facilitators: Ajla van Heel Merdanović, International Expert; Saša Gavrić & Sara Haapalainen, ODIHR; Fedra Idžaković, OSCE Mission to BiH; Elmaja Bavčić, OSCE Secretariat</p>
11:00-11:15	Break & networking
11:15-12:00	<p>Feedback from the workshop: Sarajevo Recommendations on Engaging Male Politicians as Critical Actors for Gender Equality in Politics</p> <p>Facilitators: Ajla van Heel Merdanović, International Expert; Saša Gavrić & Sara Haapalainen, ODIHR; Fedra Idžaković, OSCE Mission to BiH; Elmaja Bavčić, OSCE Secretariat</p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Closing remarks</p> <p>Thomas Busch, Deputy Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to BiH Yulia Netesova, Chief of Democratic Governance and Gender Unit, ODIHR BiH authorities' representative</p>
12:30-13:30	Lunch