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# Mapping Report

Depicting the situation of women's NGOs in partner countries of the project



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## **1. Introduction**

The present report intends to depict the situation of NGOs in the following partner countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. Moreover, it aims at highlighting the positive as well as the negative aspects of the cooperation between women's organizations, as well as similarities encountered in terms of the situation of women's NGOs in each respective country. Furthermore, the report will also identify existing active networks in each of the countries mentioned above, including if they have members who work with disadvantaged groups and with women refugees/immigrants at a regional level and if women from these backgrounds experience particular difficulties in joining active networks.

## **2. Mapping questionnaire**

The questionnaire developed by the WAVE office contains 11 questions. The questionnaire was distributed to each of the partners from the above-mentioned countries. The form tries to identify any existing active networks in a member country working on violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence (DV), and how many member organisations are part of one, as well as member-organisations who specifically work with women refugees/immigrants or with disadvantaged groups. In case a network could not be established, the questionnaire inquired about the reasons why a network could not be established in the specific country and if the organisation is part of any other active network(s). Lastly, the questionnaire enquired about cooperation between women's organisations, successful or not, examples of successful cooperation as well as the overall situation of women's NGOs in the respective countries, for example the challenges faced through potentially restrictive government policies, funding cuts etc.

Out of all the 9 partners engaged in the project all 9 of them have filled out the questionnaire.

## **3. Situation of women's NGOs in each partner country**

**Albania** – Currently our Albanian partners, 'Gender Alliance for Development Centre' and 'Woman to Woman Albania' identified two active networks, as in their country.

The first network, Albanian Woman Empowerment Network (AWEN) is a formal network that has nine member organisations, which offer services to women experiencing DV and human - trafficking, empowerment programs and shelters for victims, as well as services for perpetrators of violence. The second network is an informal one, called 'The Network against Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings'.

AWEN network has no women's organizations working with refugees, but there are 4 member organizations working with disadvantaged groups, such as women from rural areas, LGBT women, Roma and Egyptian women. The following organisations are working with the groups mentioned above are: Gender Alliance for Development Center in Tirana, Counselling Line for Women and Girls, Woman Forum Elbasan, Vatra Psycho-Social Centre in Vlore.

Both of WAVE's project partner organizations have identified cooperation between women's NGOs as very successful. Women's organisations work together to develop regular joint activities, for example lobbying and advocacy activities when it comes to law implementation, monitoring of public institutions, preparation of shadow reports for GREVIO. Women's organisations also cooperate regularly to meet the needs of women victims of violence. Some of the notable successes in this area include the development of the national programme of work with perpetrators, the referral of victims to other shelters in case of need, contributing to different draft laws such as: Law for Gender Equality in society (2008) and the Action Plan Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020).

Even though Albanian civil society is very active and generally cooperative, women's NGOs are facing significant financial constraints due to limited funding. Albanian NGOs are mostly funded by foreign donors such as UN-Women, UNDP, SIDA, USA Embassy, Austrian Development Agency etc. The Albanian Government distributes only small funds, through its Agency for Supporting Civil Society which do not allow for organisational sustainability and long-term work. Due to this situation many women's NGOs' survival is at risk, and they often find themselves in direct competition with each other. Furthermore, civil society organisations are primarily responsible for offering support services to victims of gender based violence and there is a significant lack of available public services.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** – The questionnaire was filled out by WAVE partner, Foundation United Women Banja Luka. According to the answers received, there is currently one informal network in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) 'The Safe Network of Bosnia and Herzegovina', founded in 2001, working specifically on VAW and DV. After several years of inactivity, the network was reactivated in 2011. The network has 9 full members and 12 associated members and it is active in both entities of BiH (Federation of BiH and the Republic of Srpska). All women's organizations, humanitarian associations, and NGOs that are part of the network are working with women refugees, although no organization has a single programme that specifically supports these groups. When it comes to working with disadvantaged groups, there are two active networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina that specifically involve organisations working with Roma women (Roma Women's Network Uspjeh BiH) and women with disabilities (Network of Women with Disabilities BiH). The latter is a platform created with the aim of improving communication amongst women with disabilities as well as raising awareness in society about this issue.

Our partners stated that cooperation between women's NGOs in BiH is successful. One example of recent successful cooperation involves court monitoring of criminal and minor offences in 22 municipal and district courts in cases of gender-based violence against women and children. The monitoring was conducted in 2016, and resulted in a thorough analysis as well as recommendations targeting key stakeholders in charge of protection in BiH. As a result of the recommendations presented to different stakeholders such as judiciary, responsible governmental ministries, in the Republic of Srpska, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport committed to integrating the recommendations into the Action Plan for implementing the RS Law on Protection from DV in 2018. Moreover, partner organizations established cooperation with judiciary schools to include the recommendations and findings in the curricula for 2018.

The challenges encountered by women's NGOs in the country are mainly related to funding. Most of the funding received comes from international donations and only a small part comes from national public budgets, that are specifically dedicated to providing services to women and children experiencing violence. The few public funds still available for shelters are often late due to bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of proper planning from governmental institutions. When it comes to international funds, a general decline of dedicated funding for women's NGOs is notable and a lack of long term funder commitment in this area, which makes project planning difficult and often unsustainable. Lack of sustainable funding, both from national government and international donors, negatively influences the opportunities for strengthening networks between women's NGOs and limits their ability to create and influence VAW prevention work.

**Kosovo** – The questionnaire was filled out by Women's Wellness Center Kosovo, which reported that Kosovo has two active networks working on VAW and DV. *Kosovo Women's Network* is a formal network, established in 2000, currently encompassing 86 member organizations, which includes the Women's Wellness Center. The network advocates on behalf of Kosovar women on a local, regional

but also international level, being recognized as a leading network in the country as well as in the region. The network advocates for equal opportunities in education, employment, equal political participation for women and a life free from violence. The second network, *Kosovo Shelter Coalition*, was established in 2010, as a formal coalition, with eight local organizations, but currently comprising only five local shelter organizations working with victims of DV. The networks do not work with women refugees or immigrants, as there is apparently no demand in Kosovo for this area of work. Regarding other disadvantaged groups, both networks work with these groups, such as women with disabilities. Organizations work together to advocate for better access to education or health provisions for women with disabilities.

Cooperation between women's organizations is in some cases successful, for example in 2012 the Kosovo Women's Network established a fund that provides small grants for women's organizations that lack access to other sources of funding and seek to work on women's rights, particularly among rural and/or marginalized groups such as Serbian, Bosnian, Roma Ashkali, Egyptian women and women with disabilities. This fund has enabled many organizations to continue their work.

The overall situation of women's NGOs in Kosovo is fairly fragile as they are faced with a shift in aid priorities as well as shrinking funding budgets, as many donors in Kosovo have either decreased or closed their grant programmes for women's NGOs. Donors which still offer funding, usually oblige applicants to undergo a difficult application procedure, with grants being available only for a limited number of outcomes, forcing many women's NGOs to make do with very limited human resources. The government of Kosovo covers merely 50% of the costs of some organizations that offer support services for women victims of violence and their children, women victims of trafficking and women with disabilities.

**Macedonia** – There are currently two active networks in Macedonia, namely the *National Network to end Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – Voice against Violence* and the *National Council for Gender Equality*. The first one is a formal network, which currently has 18 member organizations working on VAW, some of whom also provide support services for victims of violence. The National Council for Gender Equality is a network of 116 formal and informal organizations, working at a local level and provides services for victims of violence such as counselling, free legal aid, or the national helpline. These two networks do not work with women refugees/immigrants, but there is one organization called Open Gate – La Strada Macedonia that works with these groups. Some of the organizations part of the National Network Voice against Violence work with women with disabilities or LGBTI women.

Cooperation between women's NGOs is successful in Macedonia, as many of the accomplishments in the women's rights movement have been brought about by the cooperation between women's NGOs. However, the difficult financial situation in which most women's organizations find themselves, has increased competitiveness between them. Notable examples of successful cooperation involve the 16 Days of Activism 2017, when several events were cooperatively organized, training of future medical staff on VAW and DV, organizing panel discussions on the topic of 'Women and girls with disabilities – potential victims of GBV', as well as the joint lobbying and advocacy undertaken for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

Insufficient financial support from the Macedonian government is the primary reason why many women activists are currently in a precarious situation, as NGOs have to constantly look for new funding opportunities, which increases competitiveness between women's NGOs. With a new left-wing government in place, cooperation between women's NGOs and national authorities has increased, as civil society is now more involved in debates, actively participating for example in developing the new national action plan on VAW. Regarding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention,

the law to ratify the Convention has already been adopted and the ratification is expected to happen in the near future.

**Montenegro** – SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic, WAVE member and partner has filled out the questionnaire. In Montenegro, there are two active networks; the *Informal National Network against VAW*, and the formal *Roma Network PRVA*. The Informal National Network against VAW consists of seven women's NGOs that provide specialist support services, but also advocate for better prevention, protection and prosecution mechanisms in the area of gender-based violence. The Roma Network PRVA consists of individuals, more precisely Roma women activists. All organisations work with women refugees, if they are victims of gender-based violence and need specialised support. There is currently no organisation that particularly specialises in working with disadvantaged groups, but all organisations work with women from diverse backgrounds ((such as Roma women, women with disabilities, single mothers).

Cooperation has been identified as partially successful, as organisations in Montenegro lack a solid culture of networking, due to problems such as sustainability of services and lack of human resources. International funders support the limited number of women's organisations in the country on a project based funding, as for state funding, the state supports the National helpline but only covers 50% of its funding capacity. Women's NGOs have limited opportunities to fundraise as they face numerous barriers, such as: limited knowledge on writing fundraising proposals, a lack of human resources, to respond to survivors of violence and a limited understanding of gender-based violence by state institutions who consequently do not provide adequate funds for women's specialist services.

**Serbia** – According to WAVE member *Association Fenomena*, Serbia has one active network called *Women Against Violence Network (Mreža Žene protiv nasilja)*. The network is active in all 5 regions of Serbia, each region being coordinated by one organization. Association Fenomena coordinates the South-West region of the network, consisting of 5 organizations. The network is informal and has currently 27 member organizations which are specialized women's NGOs that provide support to women and work on changing the social context, with the ultimate goal to decrease and end VAW in Serbia. None of the organizations who are part of the network work only with women refugees/immigrants, but some organizations, such as IMPULS (Tutin, South-Western Serbia), dedicate some of their activities to women refugees. Several organizations work specifically with disadvantaged groups such as Roma women, women with disabilities, or women victims of human trafficking. These organizations are: Anti trafficking action ASTRA; Atina; Roma Children's Center; Out of Circle, Belgrade (supporting women with disabilities); Roma Center for Women and Children Daje; Out of Circle Vojvodina (supporting women with disabilities); Roma Association of Novi Becej; SOS Line Osvit (offers multilingual support: Roma and Serbian languages).

Cooperation between women's organisations is very successful due to their dedication to this field for more than 20 years. For example, the joint actions of the network have led to the 18<sup>th</sup> of May being declared as the Remembrance Day for Murdered Women, Victims of Violence (Femicide).

Nevertheless, lack of funding has forced many women's organizations to close down over the years. Local governments and the state do not provide sustainable funding options for women's NGOs, which is especially an issue for small organisations working at a local level. Furthermore, foreign donors are increasingly pulling out of the country, leaving women's organizations in a precarious situation. Another problem the network faces, is that the Serbian government is trying to establish a national women's helpline, but is refusing to involve women's NGOs in the planning and funding of this service, contrary to the prescriptions of the Istanbul Convention.

**Turkey** – According to *The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity* based in Ankara there is currently one informal network in Turkey, formed in 1998: *The Assembly on Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centers*. The network currently has 18 member organizations, working in the area of gender equality and VAW. Among the member organizations, there are some working with women refugees, even though they do not focus specifically on this type of work. Two examples of organizations working directly with women refugees are: KADAV (Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı) and AKDAM (Adana Kadın Dayanışma Merkezi ve Sigirma Evi Derneği). When it comes to organizations working with disadvantaged groups, Engelli Kadın Derneği works specifically with women who have disabilities.

Regarding the cooperation between women’s NGOs, there is an active collaboration between organizations enabling them to easily communicate or react to issues whenever necessary. Organizations have concrete experience in organizing events together or implementing different projects. An example of successful cooperation between women’s NGOs is the recent large-scale joint organising of public protest, press releases, social media actions, and communication with international and national stakeholders. These protests took place to contest the adoption of a national bill which proposed the suspension, and consequent pardoning, of sexual harassment crimes perpetrated prior to 16 of November 2016, if the perpetrator marries the victim. Due to the successful cooperation of these women’s NGOs and the subsequent public reactions, the bill was later withdrawn.

Since the State of Emergency was declared in Turkey, in July 2016, 6 women’s NGOs have been closed down. Many grassroots organizations and LGBTI organizations face the same possibility. Furthermore, there seems to be significant repression of LGBTI organizations, as the government of Ankara has, for example, banned any outdoor or indoor activities of these organizations. Even before the ban, many LGBTI activists have been taken into custody during the Pride March in Istanbul 2016. Moreover, women activists have faced the same problems, when organizing the Women’s March on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2016. These kind of government decisions are increasingly limiting the freedom and working-remit of specialist women’s and LGBTI-NGOs work.

#### **4. Common aspects identified and conclusion:**

Cooperation has been identified as being mostly successful in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Women’s organisations have organized themselves in either formal or informal networks, to tackle VAW and DV together. The strong dedication of women’s NGOs has led to successful actions, such as lobbying and advocating for improved legislation on VAW and DV, for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, conducting successful awareness-raising events using social media or organizing outdoor events.

Even though women’s NGOs are active agents of change in their region and cooperation between them is vital for their success, cases have been identified when active collaboration is not possible. Factors such as funding instability and sometimes the absence of a ‘networking-culture’, negatively influence the cooperation amongst NGOs and increase competitiveness between them. Scarcity of funding, from national governments but also due to international funders pulling out of the countries or offering only project-based funding, has forced many women’s organisations into a continuous struggle for financial stability. For example, in Macedonia, where women’s NGOs have many accomplishments due to their strong collaboration, lack of financial resources has significantly increased competitiveness between these organizations.

The political context differs from country to country, even though the problem of sustainability is clearly a joint issue. In some countries, for example Macedonia, cooperation between women’s NGOs and national government has improved, due to the newly elected left-wing government actively engaging civil society in parliamentary debates or in developing new strategies to combat VAW. In

contrast to Macedonia, the political context in Turkey is increasingly precarious, since Turkey has declared a State of Emergency in 2016. Since then, many women's NGOs and LGBTI organizations have been closed down or banned from organizing any public activities. Other countries, such as Montenegro, are confronted with a lack of understanding of about gender-based violence by government agencies.

To conclude, cooperation between women's NGOs can be identified as a stepping stone in fighting VAW and DV. Even though women's NGOs face continues challenges, in terms of for example financial sustainability that *enables* competitiveness in terms of funding, they have managed to create synergies and in all countries to organize themselves in networks. Networks, either formal or informal, unites women's voices into a stronger one, enabling them to create effective lobbying tools and allows them to fulfil their agenda.

### Mapping Questionnaire

<b>Name of organisation</b>	
<b>Representative of the organisations</b>	
<b>Website</b>	
<b>Country</b>	

1) Are there any active networks<sup>1</sup> in your country working on violence against women and domestic violence?

a) If **yes**, please provide the name of the network:

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b) If **yes**, is the network in your country (please highlight the correct answer):

- Formal
- Informal

c) If **yes**, how many member organisations does this network have and what kind of organisations are they?

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<sup>1</sup> 'Active networks' means that these networks are actively involved in fighting violence against women, e.g. by delivering direct services to women affected by gender based violence, by developing/delivering awareness raising campaigns or by fostering/maintaining cooperation between local and/or regional women's organisations



d) If **yes**, does this network have member organisations working with women refugees/immigrants at a regional level? Please write the answer in the box and if known the name of organisations.

e) If **yes**, does this network have member organisations working with disadvantaged groups (such as women with disabilities, women from minority backgrounds, LGBT+ background) at a regional level? Please write the answer in the box and if known the name of organisations.

f) If **no**, what is the reason why a network could not be established (e.g. no funding available, no interest from organisations)?

**2) Is your organization part of any active network(s)?**

**3) From your perspective, is cooperation between women's organisations in your country successful?**

a) If **yes**, please write below an example of successful cooperation amongst women's organisations

b) If **no**, can you identify the reasons why this is not happening?

**4) Please explain briefly the situation of women's NGOs in your country (funding situation, legal situation, any challenges you are facing from the government etc)**