

# Implementing principles of gender equality at local level



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In Montenegro, gender equality means equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to cultural, political, economic and social progress, as well as identical opportunities to benefit from community progress at national and local level.

Gender equality practices have been improved through cooperation between the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights - Department for Gender Equality, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Montenegro, and municipalities in Montenegro. Achieving equal opportunity policy at local level provided encouragement for further improvement of normative and institutional mechanisms, knowledge and good practices to achieve full equality at all levels. The gender equality policy of local self-government has significantly improved compared to the previous period, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the Ministry, as well as partners from local government and the civil sector. In December 2017, a joint regional conference marked the 10th anniversary of cooperation between these partners on the promotion of gender equality policy at local level. A tangible result of this cooperation was the signature of Memoranda of Cooperation with all 23 municipalities in Montenegro in 2016.

A large number of international documents and organisations deal with the issue of establishing gender equality at local level and act as reminders that equality between women and men is a basic tenet of human rights. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe within Resolution 176/2004, on the introduction of gender equality principles at local and regional level, invited countries to publicly commit to gender equality and to respond more efficiently to the needs and demands of different categories of their citizens. States were invited to develop local plans to achieve equality between women and men, distribute human and financial resources more effectively, improve decision-making and strengthen democracy.

The European Charter on the Equality of Women and Men in Local life represents one of the platforms for the 23 Memoranda of Cooperation with local self-governments on the implementation of gender equality policy in Montenegro. However, it has not yet been signed by any municipality. Through the regional initiative based on the Sarajevo Declaration 2006, this Charter is foreseen to be signed by the Ulcinj Municipality, thereby joining it to the Network of Association of Local Authorities of Western Balkan Countries.

The 2015 Law on Gender Equality imposes conditions on all state bodies, state administration bodies and local self-governments, public institutions, public enterprises, and other legal entities with statutory authority, along with companies, other legal entities and entrepreneurs. In order to achieve gender equality, all phases of planning, adoption and implementation of decisions, together with all activities undertaken within their competence, must assess and evaluate the impact of those decisions and actions on the situations of women and men. The same Law also obliges local self-governments to promote gender equality and take important measures and activities for its achievement.

In 2007, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, together with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, launched the project 'Gender equality in the local community', in order to establish gender equality and the principle of equal opportunity at municipal level.

**Implementing entity:** Ministry for Human and Minority Rights

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## **The collaborative work of the Women's Political Network (WPN) led to several advocacy actions**

Over 200 types of training have been organised at local level since the first Memorandum was signed. Over 3,000 people have participated, including representatives from municipalities, the civil sector, youth workers, the police, health, education and other relevant institutions and organisations at local level. In 2013, the Ministry and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro also supported the creation and maintenance of the Network of Municipal Coordinators.

After the implementation of activities and training on gender equality, a bilateral Memoranda of Cooperation was signed by all municipalities in 2015, intensifying cooperation in this field. One of the obligations of the Memoranda was the adoption of local action plans for gender equality, with 11 municipalities establishing local action plans to date. Additional municipal-level progress includes: (1) local Gender Equality Offices have been established in five municipalities; (2) Gender Equality Decisions have been adopted in 14 municipal assemblies, envisaging the adoption of special measures to prevent gender-based discrimination and create equal opportunities for women and men in local self-government; (3) 21 municipalities have appointed several persons to support the coordination of gender equality initiatives in the region; (4) Gender Equality Councils have been established in 12 municipalities; and (5) seven municipalities have budgeted funds to implement gender equality policy.

Despite the significant activities undertaken in the previous period to strengthen gender equality at local level, additional efforts are needed to improve the situation of women in local communities. The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro will continue to encourage activities at local level to provide adequate support and assistance in the implementation of concrete measures and activities aimed at achieving equality of women and men in local self-governments.

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## **Transferability to other contexts**

In 2018, it was the first time that local self-governments recognised the special importance of women's entrepreneurship in drafting their budgets. Five municipalities (Podgorica, Budva, Bar, Danilovgrad, Berane and Herceg Novi) now have dedicated funds (amounting to EUR 120,000) for women's entrepreneurship in their 2018 budgets, as part of the WPN initiative.

Dedicated funds represent an essential step in determining whether local/regional authorities' objectives to achieve gender equality are implemented in their budget decisions. In other words, this allows an analysis of the use of public funds for gender equality, focusing on allocation of resources, assessing the impact of unequal distribution of public funds on women and men, and restructuring the budget to achieve a fairer allocation of funds.

Montenegro continues to face challenges in this respect, with national budget authorities yet to take a gender-based approach. However, it is planned that by 2021, budget programmes will include gender indicators that show the proportion of the budget directed towards achieving equal opportunities for women and men. By 2021, therefore, budgets in Montenegro will be designed to show the financial impacts of (in)equality.

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## Learning and capacity-building potential

The activities outlined above led to the development of three documents at local level, which will help to build capacity for all participants:

- Implementation analysis of the Memorandum of Cooperation for gender equality and equality policy at municipal level.
- Handbook on gender equality for civil servants and employees in local self-governments.
- Template of a local action plan.

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## Sustainability of the collaboration initiative

The project is ongoing and will continue its activities for the foreseeable future. In 2018, the plan targeted advanced training at local level, logistical support for smaller municipalities in preparing their local action plans, training on local budgeting for gender focal points, and activities related to marking 16 days of activism to combat violence against women. In each case, there is a financial aspect to project sustainability, with project activities to be continued in the following year.

# National plans and strategies

The Action Plan for achieving gender equality in Montenegro for the period 2017-2021, followed by the Enforcement programme 2017-2018, was adopted by the government of Montenegro in March 2017. It is the third developing document for the implementation of gender equality policy in Montenegro.

Successful implementation of this strategic document requires the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, particularly the Department for Gender Equality, to cooperate and coordinate with all ministries, state administration bodies, the parliament, public institutions, local government bodies, local self-government bodies and the civil sector.

The third [Action Plan](#) has identified the following focus areas: (1) improvement of human rights for women and gender equality; (2) gender-sensitive education and training; (3) gender equality in the economy; (4) gender-sensitive healthcare; (5) gender-based violence; (6) media, culture and sport; (7) equality in decision-making in political and public life; and (8) institutional mechanisms for implementing gender equality policies.

In each area, a strategic goal is defined, specifying the activities, responsible bodies, partners, timeframe, indicators, means of evaluation and the funds necessary to carry out these activities.

Given the importance of establishing effective mechanisms in Montenegro for the implementation and monitoring of women's fundamental rights' protection, work on the implementation of legal solutions is expected to be harmonised with international standards and effective practice, most notably the implementation of measures targeting capacity-building of institutional mechanisms at local level.

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## Contacts/Further Information

### Further information

[Montenegro, Ministry for Minority and Human Rights.](#)



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## Metadata

