



# TALKING WOMEN

ONE YEAR OF EU SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN KOSOVO



When the EUSR gender team proposed me a plan to reach out to the people in Kosovo and discuss gender, I immediately liked the idea. In January 2019, I launched a series of debates under the title: EU Gender Talks: Because We Make a Difference. Inequalities between women and men in Kosovo are still prevalent. So, the purpose was to have monthly discussions on different topics in relation to gender, with the aim of raising awareness, contribute to the change of mentalities and improve gender equality policies in Kosovo.

The 12 sessions have gathered more than 500 participants from Kosovo institutions, civil society organisations, EU Member States representatives and other international stakeholders. They have included interesting topics such as Women in Business, Gender and Youth, Gender in the Electoral Cycle, Women in Media and Women and the Environment, just to name a few.

Women are underrepresented in Kosovo's public life, particularly when it comes to decision-making positions. In my opinion, there are no valid excuses for that: after more than 3 years in Kosovo, I believe that these numbers do not represent the Kosovo society that I am seeing: Kosovo is full of competent women who display a high degree of professionalism at all levels. Yet, it is clear that in most of the occasions, they are not given the chance to show it. Their voices are not heard. I trust that the EU Gender Talks have offered one additional platform for women in Kosovo to be heard. We reached



**Ambassador  
Nataliya Apostolova**  
Head of the EU Office in Kosovo /  
EU Special Representative

different audiences and topics made every session take diverse shapes and sizes. Women were talking loud and we wanted the impact of their voices to be multiplied. This book 'Talking Women' is the result of it. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have. I can assure you that the conclusions of the EU Gender Talks, together with the interviews of the 12 featured women, are stirring the EU Office/EUSR policies and activities, as well as our political dialogues with Kosovo authorities. So, I want to thank these 12 inspiring women and all other women and men who have contributed to the discussions in the last 12 months.

Finally, I want to give a special thank you to the gender team of the EUSR office in Kosovo for the enthusiasm, hard work and efforts that they have placed in the EU Gender Talks and in this publication and also for their contribution to gender equality in Kosovo.



A black and white portrait of a woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a dark jacket. She is speaking into a microphone. The background is a large red and blue graphic.

It takes courage to be outspoken and seek honest discussions and to put words to paper with the objective of seeing it through to a complete book. I salute Ambassador Apostolova, European Union Special Representative/Head of the EU Office in Kosovo and all members of her team who have contributed throughout the last year to the different activities on gender equality, which resulted in this publication, entitled "Talking Women".

Words and gender matter and can lead to actions. They can be the first step towards true equality, tolerance and understanding in our professional and private lives. Words can open up opportunities and make us reflect on our ambitions and potentials.

Gender Equality is a core value of the European Union and a principle we will uphold also in the future. Equality between women and men is no exception. The EU is striving to accelerate the efforts towards gender equality in different fields, which are also very well reflected in this book: From equal access to health services, education and economic empowerment, and the need for equal representation in politics and elections, sports, religion and culture, gender budgeting and technology. I was especially interested in the discussion in the Kosovo Sustainable development Week. I am glad to see that there are strong women and men in Kosovo that are fighting inequalities with a global perspective understanding how the lack of respect to the environment affect us. It is also important to remind us that the EU calls for zero-tolerance towards all forms of violence and discrimination against women and effective access to justice and realisation of rights for women and girls victims of trafficking.

The promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming should be treated as a priority also in Kosovo by translating policies and political commitment into practice. All women featured in this book have provided their views and often stand as role-models for the wider public. I can see that their contribution to gender equality was crucial and will continue to be so also in the future. Altogether we can have the best positive effect on the lives of women and men, boys and girls by addressing gender inequalities and promoting true involvement of everyone.

### **Viola von Cramon-Taubadel**

German Member of the European Parliament, Green party, Rapporteur of the European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee for Kosovo

# INTRODUCTION

With the objective of further advance gender equality in European Union's external activities and relations, the EU Gender Action Plan II was adopted in September 2015.

Known as the GAP II, this plan aims at taking gender into account in all EU external activities and relations, including all EU programs and projects, external spending, and political dialogue with government counterparts.

Following the GAP II, a **Kosovo specific Gender Analysis** was launched by the Head of the EU Office/EUSR in October 2018. The report pointed out challenges and shortcomings in the field of gender equality and women empowerment in Kosovo, especially when it comes to representation at all levels, mainstreaming gender in Government programs and policies and implementation of gender legislation.

As it can be read in the last EU Progress Report: 'Kosovo's legal framework for equality between women and men is broadly in line with international standards. However, women often face gender-based violence and high discrimination in the labour market, the judiciary and the police. Women are severely underrepresented in decision-making in both the central government and the municipalities. Women also continue to face challenges with property ownership and inheritance'.

The year 2019 is definitely the year when Kosovo intensified all the debates and productive exchange of views when it comes to women empowerment, gender equality and equal opportunities for everyone.

Yet, there is more to be done.

The European Union in Kosovo remains a committed supporter and donor. Kosovo needs more women in high political positions, more women in decision-making bodies, in arts and sports, health, education and culture and all other spheres of live that require leadership.

In January 2019, as a direct result of the aforementioned Gender Analysis, the EU Office/EUSR in Kosovo launched a series of discussions, under the title: '**EU Gender Talks: Because We Make A difference**'. In collaboration with the former EU Information and Cultural Centre in Kosovo - now Europe House- the talks aimed at contextualising the inequalities within different topics, raise awareness, contribute to the change of mind-sets and improve gender equality policies in Kosovo. Up to 15 people - women and men- were invited to each debate, some organized in Pristina and some in North Mitrovica - both in Europe House premises. Sessions were foreseen as semi-structured talks, with brief presentations from institutions present, with media and journalists always invited and giving their valuable input.



The talks were chaired by the Head of EU Office/EUSR - Nataliya Apostolova or one member of her team, always with a bold expertise and interest in this field. They were attended by groups of experts from Kosovo institutions, civil society organisations and international organisations. Some were foreseen as roundtables of up to 20 participants, but some other took the shape of large events that attracted 50 to 80 people and important media attention.



In this publication, we bring you interviews with 12 inspiring women who participated in the 12 talks. In them, you will have a more personal perspective of where the 12 discussions went and some of the conclusions reached. We have included some other actions undertaken by the EU this year, which contributed to the support the overall effort of Kosovo to advance in women's rights.

### **Editorial team:**

Arbër Selmani, Reyes Charle Cuellar,  
Annette Fath Lihic, Albana Gjinolli,  
Maria Berishaj-Sylejmani



WOMEN  
TALKING



4  
European  
Union  
Kosovo

## EU GENDER TALKS

because we make the difference

IMPROVEMENT EQUALITY PARTICIPATION

WOMEN BOYS MEN YOUTH GIRLS

POLITICS DECISION MAKING EMPLOYMENT

CENTRAL AND LOCAL LEVEL HEALTH SPORTS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP DIALOGUE DEMOCRACY

EUROPE FUTURE TOGETHER

DEVELOPMENT ACCESS HUMAN RIGHTS



## JANUARY 2019 - GENDER AND PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

### **ELVANA SHALA: We shall first accept ourselves and who we are, so we can expect others to accept us**

The EU Office/EUSR in Kosovo decided to start 2019 in a very special way, by launching a series of EU Gender Talks. The first event of the series was held on 21 January 2019 at the European Union Information and Culture Centre (EUICC), now known as Europe House, in Pristina. Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova, Head of the EU Office/EU Special Representative (EUSR) and Elvana Shala, Ambassador of Goodwill for Kosovo, introduced the discussion on 'Gender and people with special needs'.

As with any other human rights issue in Kosovo, people with special needs face a number of challenges in defending their rights. "Although legislation and strategies for the rights of people with special needs are adopted and in place, their implementation remains a challenge, and the budget is not there", said Ambassador Apostolova during her remarks. Ms Shala, Ambassador of Goodwill for

Kosovo who is part of the special needs community herself, highlighted in the debate that it was not easy for her to become an ambassador, given that she had limited access to institutions, buildings and so on in Kosovo, yet she never surrendered.

The discussion was followed by an exhibition of photographs taken at a fashion show for people with special needs held in Pristina in December 2018, during which Ms Shala and the NGO Down Syndrome Kosovo, in partnership with the EUSR in Kosovo, marked Human Rights Day. Among other events, this year Ms Shala was invited to be a speaker and lecturer at the International Model United Nations Conference in Thailand. We interviewed Ms Shala, who is the perfect example of a woman with special needs who has overcome boundaries and struggles and fought for equal rights and inclusion within society.

### **In your view, what are the biggest challenges that women face in Kosovo?**

I think that we definitely need to change the prejudices women face; we have to break them all. In Kosovo, women still face a lot of gender prejudice, which significantly affects them in their professional and personal development. Another challenge is the absence of women in decision-making positions. Our policymakers have not yet come to understand the importance of women in decision-making positions, and as a result they are severely underrepresented in various important processes for the country. As a result, gender equality is still non-existent in Kosovo in many aspects.

### **What are the main issues that people with special needs face?**

There are countless struggles in this regard. People with special needs face a lot of discrimination, and this is due to a lack of awareness of this vulnerable group of people. They face a lack of a proper infrastructure that prevents them from moving around partially, or sometimes at all, in different areas. There is a need for special schools designed for young people with special needs, bearing in mind that many do not go on to university. With training, they could gain professional knowledge to succeed in different areas of work, something that would be helpful to them. Above all, the main challenges are finding work and inclusion within society, as a result of a lack of family support, but also social and institutional support.

### **How important is family for people with special needs and how they could be supported?**

Family is the main pillar for each person. Even in the case of people with special needs, family plays a crucial role in their education and self-acceptance. The family should support them to integrate within society and motivate them to be successful and to dare to dream. We are seeing that, in Kosovo, many families continue to hide family members who have special needs as they are ashamed of them or face prejudices from people around them. This is a drastic problem that can demoralise people and deprive them of a life of dignity. If someone does not receive an education or proper treatment and support from their family, they will not be accepted by society as a whole. Personally, I think that with family support, everyone – regardless of the obstacles and challenges – can succeed in ending stigma and stereotypes and be successful as a result.

### **What are some of the most immediate actions that the government should do to address the issues of people with special needs? If you were in a position of political power, what would you change?**

The government and the Assembly should introduce more laws addressing the issue of people with special needs, with an intention of having them implemented. Without having a proper and applicable law on people with special needs in Kosovo, these people will continue to face the same problems. All problems the government need to tackle should be foreseen in the law, so that we see changes in the long term. If I was in a decision making position, I would introduce a special law that would encompass infrastructure, the labour market and education for people with special needs, as well as a yearly state campaign to raise awareness and promote the integration and equal rights of people with special needs within society.

### **How do you see the role of women in improving lives of people with special needs?**

As women bring us into this world, they understand the suffering and struggle people go through, including people with special needs. This becomes even more true if a mother has a child with special needs. The role of the mother in the treatment of people with special needs is tremendously important due to the human and emotive connection that exists between them.

### **How do you think your example has helped and can help others?**

I was born and raised in a family who taught me to live my life as a normal person without being limited by my disability. I was an equal member of the family along with my brother and my sisters. I took care to take this form of normality and transport it within my friendship groups. I was always a very ambitious person, regardless of my health problems, and I always had a clear vision and projection of what I wanted to become in life. I fought a lot for my rights and many of my dreams came true. I never hesitated to express this in public, so that other people with special needs would be encouraged to live their life in the most wonderful and normal way. I hope a lot of people can learn something from my example. Being the first Ambassador of Goodwill for Kosovo and also having special needs challenged a lot of taboos and prejudices in this society, showing everyone that a person with special needs in Kosovo can be an official representative, staff member, a human rights activist and a supporter of great causes. Of course, I have faced many difficulties in my life and I still face a lot of obstacles, but I will continue to be myself. My advice is that we must first and foremost accept ourselves and who we are, so that we can expect other people to also accept us.

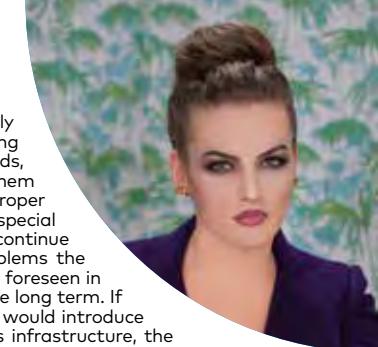


### **'The Beauty Begins With Us', Fashion Show and Photo Exhibition**

The first Gender Talk was followed by the Exhibition 'The Beauty Begins With Us'. The event was a continuation of the EUO/EUSR funded fashion show for people with special needs, which under the same name had taken place in December 2018. It marked the International Day of the People with Special Needs and the International Human Rights Day.

The show was an original idea of Ambassador Elvana Shala. She worked hard to coordinate all actors involved and implement impeccably a very professional- as well as at times emotional - show. More than 20 Kosovo fashion designers created the outfits that the models presented in the catwalk. Elvana introduced the show herself and Ambassador Apostolova welcomed all participants, which included the families of the models as well as many authorities and public. The aim remained to raise awareness and show that those with different abilities can be integrated in the society, even in a field so much driven by the appearance.

35 photographs taken during the show were exhibited for 20 days at the EUICC. The exhibition was the first of the Year 2019 at the EUICC and it attracted great attention by media, public officials and general public.





## FEBRUARY 2019 - WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

### **JETA XHARRA: We need to make sure that there are guaranteed places in the table for women in all roles**

The second EU Gender Talk, 'Because we make a difference', focused on the role of women in journalism and the portrayal of women in the media in Kosovo. The event took place in February 2019 with female journalists from all over Kosovo participating in an effort to highlight the relations between women and the media and the challenges of female journalists in Kosovo. The participants discussed the inequalities and discrimination that women face in the sector. Many of them felt that they had been targeted, even personally attacked, manhandled and censored throughout the years when they were trying to be watchdogs and fulfil their mission as professional journalists. Smear campaigns and direct threats affect freedom of speech in Kosovo and elsewhere in the world. Jeta Xharrá, a newsreader at the most watched current affairs programme in Kosovo, 'Jeta në Kosovë' and Kosovo Director for the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), participated in the debate. We

conducted an interview with Jeta, a woman who overcame major challenges and is today one of the most respected journalists not only in Kosovo, but in the Balkan region.

#### **In your view, what are the biggest challenges that women face in Kosovo?**

To get Kosovo's public funds to be spent on citizens' priorities (such as education, health and environment). It is unacceptable that we have places in Kosovo where people still have no sewerage system and no water system installed in their homes. It is unacceptable that children have difficulty walking to school because there are either no sidewalks, or they are taken over by cars. It is intolerable that our government wants to build a third coal power plant, while roughly 1,000 children and babies are dying each year due to poor air quality, according to World Bank figures. So, for me as a woman, it is intolerable to allow this government to build this power plant and risk shortening the lives of future generations. This is why I am fighting to stop it.

### Is freedom of the press in Kosovo moving backwards or forwards?

When compared with the rest of the region, Kosovo is not doing too badly in terms of freedom of speech; it has free press and a dynamic media scene. I can say what I want in Kosovo and I can criticise whoever I want, but this freedom of speech has been won; it did not come for granted for my generation of journalists. I belong to a generation where journalists like myself were invited for 'informative talks' by Serbian police in 1998 and 1999, when we were reporting during the war in Kosovo. We would film atrocities and then hide the tapes from the rest of the country, yet our reports would reach the world screens. I was working for the BBC at the time, because Albanians were excluded from public TV. I set up a newspaper in Albanian to reveal the truth, it was called 'Buksi', which means 'The farmer', in order to prevent it from being shut down. It was the only printed informative source in the Albanian language in Kosovo.

### How important is family for people with special needs and how they could be supported?

Family is the main pillar for each person. Even in the case of people with special needs, family plays a crucial role in their education and self-acceptance. The family should support them to integrate within society and motivate them to be successful and to dare to dream. We are seeing that, in Kosovo, many families continue to hide family members who have special needs as they are ashamed of them or face prejudices from people around them. This is a drastic problem that can demoralise people and deprive them of a life of dignity. If someone does not receive an education or proper treatment and support from their family, they will not be accepted by society as a whole. Personally, I think that with family support, everyone – regardless of the obstacles and challenges – can succeed in ending stigma and stereotypes and be successful as a result. Even after the war, we faced threats when we were investigating corruptive practices and discussing some taboo themes. On one occasion in post-war Kosovo, a BIRN reporter was threatened at gunpoint at the scene and had the tape confiscated; we filmed the attack and aired it. A series of threats and witch hunt started, and again, we stood our ground, and continued to report the truth. We did not give in to threats, and we took those that threatened us to the police and the courts, although this was not very successful.

### What are the main challenges as a woman when it comes to leading such a big organisation? Do you think women have a distinctive managerial style?

I founded BIRN Kosovo with three people. It has now grown to be an organisation of roughly 60 people who work as reporters,

court monitors, researchers, legal advisors, project managers, producers, technicians, and so on. It is an honour to lead these people, who have the energy and dynamism to stay here in Kosovo and improve the country. I am quite motivated and inspired by the activism of my colleagues, who do not do this job because I tell them to do it. I am not running a private endeavour. The majority of people who work for BIRN feel they are stakeholders in this NGO and they make sure that they not only report on cases, but they take those cases to the police and the courts where necessary, and they have often been successful in this. They make an individual decision to testify. I am happy when I see how reporters follow up on the corruption or injustice seen in citizen complaints we receive on Kallxo.com, which has become the country's most trusted anti-corruption media platform with more than 10,000 reports since 2012. I am not sure what my managerial style is, because I did not attend a managerial school. Instead, I did a Master's degree in War Studies at King's College London, so I can only tell you I have read a lot of books on strategizing and have learned from the best, by seeing how BBC reporters work at the scene. That is my background. But, I would not say I am unique; in the BIRN network, 5 out of 6 BIRN country NGOs are run by women, so we would not know much about male managerial style!

### How can media and the government help to defy stereotypes and change mind-sets in relation to equality?

We need to make sure there is a guaranteed place at the table for women in all roles: in editorial desks, in panels, in TV debates, etc. We need not to invite women to speak only on topics that are considered 'soft', but we should include them in every single topic and debate, as far as possible. With the government and institutions, we need to constantly promote the feminist agenda, by asking them about it publicly on TV. I am doing this so much, that in my last interview with Prime Minister Haradinaj, before the interview ended, he himself volunteered a statement about the fact that he would like to convince his brothers to get his sister to have the same share in the family property. Giving women an equal share in family property is a campaign I have been pushing with almost every single public official that I invite to my programme. So, this just proves that when you raise the expectations of public officials, they are more likely to include gender equality in their agenda. It starts happening even if you do not ask the question!



### EU Investigative Journalism Award won by three women journalists

On 30 October 2019, the EU Office/EUSR supported the organization of the Award Ceremony of the EU Investigative Journalism Award for the Western Balkans and Turkey. The Award is recognition for the work of journalists in the most burning issues in the society, such as the rule of law, transparency, abuse of power and fundamental rights, corruption and organized crime.

This time three courageous women were the recipients of the Award: Saranda Ramaj, Koha Ditore (First Prize), Serbeze Haxhijaj, RTK (Second Prize) and Ardiana Thaci, KTV (third prize) were the winners of the prizes. At the ceremony, the Deputy Head of the EU Office/EUSR stressed that journalists should be able to exercise their function free of political pressures and interference, with the outmost professional integrity.

The EU pays high importance to freedom of expression. Without freedom of expression and freedom of the media, an informed, active and engaged citizenry is impossible. The award is established by European Commission to foster freedom of expression in the media and support to investigative journalism in monitoring reform processes and keeping up the historical momentum towards EU accession.



## MARCH 2019 - GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

### **VALDETE DAKA: Women have a more intense feeling of responsibility and they carry it within their working place too**

Gender equality throughout the electoral cycle was discussed during the third EU Gender Talk which took place on Monday 25 March in Pristina. Elections are a critical process which determine a country's political leadership. However, for gender inclusiveness to become a reality, it is necessary to specifically address the hurdles to women's participation in all three stages of the electoral cycle, the pre-electoral, electoral and the post-electoral periods. Ms Valdete Daka, chairwoman of the Central Election Commission and Dr Annette M. Fath-Lihic, EUSR Chief Political Adviser and Executive Coordinator co-chaired the debate. Beyond quotas, other measures are needed to make equal participation of women in politics a reality. Commitment within the political party structures to include and support female candidates is essential. We sat down with Daka to dig deeper into the issue of gender and women within the electoral cycle and the electoral process overall.

**According to your view, what are the biggest challenges that women face in Kosovo?**

In general, women have it more difficult and face more struggles and obstacles if they want to have a career and professional achievements. I believe this is true all over the world, but it's a characteristic which is especially true in the Balkan countries, in patriarchal and traditional societies like Kosovo, where women were never fully involved in the professional or political sphere. One of the most worrying struggles is the fact that, even though you can be a successful woman reaching your goals and expectations, you can never really aim for the top of the pyramid of success. It becomes even harder to maintain yourself there. You can be a deputy in chief, vice president and all sorts of other senior positions, but it is incredibly hard to be the director, the chairwoman, the head of the industry you are aiming for, due to the fact that you will always be evaluated by men. Sometimes, men cannot handle seeing women excel. We had a female president, but she was not elected by the people; I

believe it would have been impossible for her to be in that position otherwise. Men cannot easily accept the fact that a woman can be as good as them, or even better. I am the head of the Central Election Commission (CEC), and that's due to the fact that, in 2010 nobody wanted to take my position, with CEC being a very complex institution. In 2020, I will mark my first decade in this position.

#### **Apart from quotas, how do you think the participation of women in political life can be encouraged?**

From certain examples, we are already seeing that women can be amazing politicians, even without the quota scheme. The quota scheme has played its part in getting women into parliament. Nevertheless, women have surpassed the quota and some of them now have the required votes to compete and enter the parliament. I keep thinking that, still, it is hard for a woman to reach the peak of a certain institution or party. How many female mayors are there today in Kosovo? The answer says a lot. The biggest parliamentary parties do not have a woman as their head. I am not aware that women even have the courage to nominate themselves or be nominated for such an engagement. When women think of nominating themselves, they do not get the proper support from the party; this may be because of the fact that they are women, but also because of internal party policies. Men in general find it hard to digest the fact that a woman can be in charge. We do have women in the political sphere, but it is a very symbolic number.

#### **How has being a woman affected your career in the judiciary?**

When I accepted to take over the position and up until 2017, a lot of people within the CEC were men. Now, we have more women involved. Being a woman has affected me a lot, in the beginning I was considered a doll, a puppet, everybody wanted me to just do my job and engage less in everything. Men would do the rest. Adding to me being a woman, it was hard because the institution was quite politicised and hard to manage, coming out of 2010 elections in Kosovo – probably the worst elections ever to be held in Kosovo with a lot of corruption and theft. CEC was anathematised by everyone, it was a target of a lot of critics and bad press. Politics is meant to be for men and this is the general discourse, so for me this was a double obstacle.

#### **Do you think women have a distinctive managerial style?**

Women look after their working place, the same as they do with their families. Ever since childhood, women are educated to manage the family – this being the core of every society. Thus, women have a more intense feeling of responsibility, rooted deep down in their existence. Women create families, take care of children, have a lot of authority and they convey this to their institutions. Traditionally, institutions led by women are more successful. Women treat their working place just as they treat their home, with a lot of caring and love. This is something that I do not see in men. Men treat their working place very superficially; they have a proper timetable and they don't always seem flexible. Women do micromanage. This is also the way I have tried to cooperate during my time here. I try to look into every detail, perform every duty with passion and willpower.

#### **How has the management of elections improved since the beginning of your tenure?**

I joined the Central Election Commission when it was in a very chaotic condition. Gradually, I have also learned my way through the process, especially after the terrible elections of 2010. Let us not forget that the last elections we had in October were amazing. On 6 October 2019, we elevated ourselves in what I like to call Scandinavian elections – with Scandinavia being a great example of the electoral process. Everything was organised perfectly and political entities showed a great deal of political culture. Modesty aside, the management of elections has improved a lot in the last decade. Until 2010, the Central Election Commission was part of the OSCE, acting as a sort of product working under the OSCE's umbrella. Today, thanks to international missions, national institutions and our staff, we have an extraordinary sum of achievements. International observation missions evaluated us positively based on the last elections. I am pleased that, nowadays, people no longer talk about manipulations, industrial theft and a distorted election process.



#### **Majlindë Sinani Lulaj, Deputy Ombudsperson**

Majlindë Sinani Lulaj is a Deputy Ombudsperson, since January 2018. She is a human rights activist, directly involved in advocacy and promotion of human rights, with focus on freedom of speech, including media freedom and access to public documents; socio - economic and political rights, including gender equality, etc. She was engaged as a consultant by the UNFPA, to conduct a National Assessment of Reproductive Health and Rights. Her previous experience is linked with Kosovo Census Project, Ministry of Public Administration and Parliament.

One of the focuses of the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo is advancing gender equality. In 2019, in the wake of the Kosovo Parliamentary elections, the Ombudsperson filed a lawsuit against Central Election Commission related to gender discrimination in political entities candidates' list for 2019 Parliamentary Elections. The Ombudsperson was calling for the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality in the electoral process, that mean 50% representation of candidates of both genders in political candidates list for the general elections. The Ombudsperson has filed this as an institution of equality under the Law on Gender Equality as well as an institution with powers defined also by the Law on the Protection from Discrimination.



APRIL 2019 – GENDER AND YOUTH

## **JOVANA RADOSAVLJEVIC: Society teaches women to be apologetic and discourages them from openly expressing their opinion**

On 23 April 2019, the fourth 'EU Gender Talk' took place at Europe House in North Mitrovica. More than 40 civil society representatives from Pristina and North Mitrovica discussed the topic of gender and youth. Young people from various communities stressed the importance of activism in challenging attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes in today's society. As real agents of change, they outlined the importance of their role in lobbying for the implementation of gender equality and youth-related legislation, increased efforts to be part of the decision-making and establishing dialogue between various interest groups. Despite the differences, it was agreed that young women face similar challenges in the Western Balkans. While having to perform at school, university and work place as much as young men, young women are still expected to aim at being mothers, spouses and help the family otherwise. The challenges of the young members of the LGTBI community were also discussed. Jovana Radosavljevic, Executive Director

of New Social initiative, a young woman from Leposavić representing civil society, gives us an insight into the challenges that young people face in Kosovo, especially women and those belonging to vulnerable groups.

### **How different is being a young woman from being a young man in Kosovo and in the Balkan region in general?**

Even though there has been significant progress in the Western Balkans when it comes to the role of young women and men, we still overwhelmingly fall into the patriarchal stereotypes and patterns of behaviour. Young women are encouraged to pursue higher education and a career but are still expected to fulfil the role of a mother, wife and housewife. The society's expectations also affect young men; they continue to be pressured to reach and maintain the role of a provider and are frowned upon if they show any weakness. Society also teaches women to be apologetic, discouraging them from openly expressing their opinion or pursuing a lifestyle that does not fit into the mould. As a result, women tend to be more insecure about their abilities and tend

to withdraw, while often men readily take on responsibilities they are not qualified for. There is a stereotype across the Western Balkans that women, regardless of their profession or the level of responsibility they carry at the workplace, need to get married and have children in order to be considered successful. This is a heavy burden. There is a need to educate both men and women in our society. Due to social norms and traditional roles, women do not let themselves dream and seek out the life that makes them happy.

#### **Stereotypes of what is expected from young women in Kosovo are still a reality – are things changing?**

Stereotypes are omnipresent in Kosovo, but society is slowly changing. Women are still considered successful if they get married and have children. Having a job is a plus, but it is marriage that will characterise a woman as successful in the community's eyes. Still, women are expected to work, get married and raise children. A woman in Kosovo still carries the burden of having three jobs: their paid job, housework and bringing up the children. Also, women are increasingly encouraged to pursue a career, but they are less likely to end up in leadership or decision-making positions. When it comes to political engagement, even though there are multiple positive examples, female politicians are often consulted on soft topics, i.e. gender, while the 'serious topics' are the responsibility of men. The new generation of female leaders in different sectors in Kosovo brings hope. These positive examples should be encouraged and mainstreamed, while the community as a whole needs to be further educated on the issue.

#### **Tell us a bit about your experience as a young professional woman?**

As a Kosovar Serb from North Kosovo and a young woman, it has not been easy to find my place and earn recognition in my professional surrounding. Being from an ethnic minority, a young person and a woman, I have faced many obstacles in my professional path. I have invested time and energy in my education to be confident of who I am and what I know. If I had not invested in education and worked hard, I am not sure I would have been confident enough to take on the professional challenges that I have today. Today, I am breaking the invisible barriers in my surroundings. I run a successful

NGO. I make executive decisions. I have men in my team who do not consider themselves superior because of their gender. I encourage women around me to engage more and want more. This reflects on the way men in my surroundings perceive women.

Women generally need to work more than men to reach the same results and gain respect and recognition. Women are often mansplained, not taken seriously or ignored. Therefore, we need to work twice as hard to get the same results as men.

#### **LGBTI rights are still a pending issue in Kosovo, but young activists are making a big effort to trigger change. What is needed to change mentalities in a traditional society?**

To successfully change mentalities in a traditional society, there needs to be a political will, a safe space for public discussion, and public affirmation of the LGBTI community. The media's role is crucial in shaping a new discourse, by creating positive narratives and affirmative stories in all corners of society. Today, it takes courage to come out, and therefore there need to be guaranteed safety and inclusion mechanisms. Finally, in addition to the political will and change of discourse, young and old people need to be educated.

#### **Young people have a lot to say, but their voices are not always heard. What do you think the institutions can do to ensure young people are represented?**

The institutions should encourage discussion and create a space for dialogue. Their responsibility should be to educate young people about their rights and encourage them to participate actively and meaningfully. Space should be provided for young leaders to emerge. Young people should be encouraged to become politically active. Positive examples should be promoted in order to show that decisions can be influenced. Finally, political elites need to be educated on the new knowledge and ideas that young people can bring to society.



#### **Lend Mustafa, a courageous activist and an outspoken voice**

"Being the first transgender to speak out in Kosovo for my gender identity is something I could consider a privilege. Living in one of the most homophobic and transphobic countries in the Balkans, personally I didn't expect much from the beginning. I was actually prepared for the worst back then. In our society things are really shifting in the past 5 years. I remember when people would tell me not to come out because it is dangerous and it could end up very badly. But here we are, not only I am out as a transgender guy, there are so many other LGBTI+ people (especially teenagers) being outspoken and addressing LGBTI issues. The new generation is full of hope, full of rage to make a change and they will. They're so strong and inspiring."

Transgender people have a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their sex assigned at birth. Lend Mustafa was born as a woman/girl, but is transitioning towards being a man. Lend Mustafa has proudly been one of the participants of our EU Gender Talks, and this is what he has to say about the LGBT community and its acceptance in Kosovo.

"The moment I decided to come out and get out there to fight for our rights, there's too many things I had to give up on. Friends, jobs, circles, family members. I had to start all over again but I was focused and determined to inspire other LGBTI people. Honestly speaking, institutions aren't that promising. When it comes to human rights and especially LGBTI rights in Kosovo, I have been disappointed too many times. Things have to be pushed forward from activists constantly and nothing regarding LGBTI rights is a priority. However, some people working in public institutions give me hope sometimes, it would be a shame to generalize all of them. Currently my whole focus is shifted to the community, to the culture. I realized that no matter how much I would push for a specific cause, it will always be less powerful without taking the community with me. I'm currently gathering as many people for a new queer wave, where we all stand up at once and go get what we deserve, which is nothing more than equality, safety and love. We have such a strong culture, we have history as a community and we got to use it to empower each other and ourselves. Once we all stand up, at the same time and same path, that's when we will get our rights with no doubt" Lend says in this short interview we conducted with him.



## MAY 2019 – WOMEN IN BUSINESS

### **ARTA SHEHU: Women sometimes limit themselves because they tend to fall into the stereotypes**

May 2019 was all about women in business. To discuss the role of women in the economy, and in the framework of the EU sponsored camping, Let's Talk about Economy, the 5th Gender Talk was more than just a debate. A full-day combined event of included the launching of the report "Gender Quotas in Corporate Boards in Kosovo", a panel discussion on Women in Business, and an Info Session with start-ups, focussed on women-led business and the importance of mentorship. In partnership with the Equal Rights for All Coalition, a coalition of NGO supported by the EU office in Kosovo, the event was attended by more than 80 participants from the business community, civil society organisations, students, government institutions and embassies. Arta Shehu, co-founder of Labbox and jCoders Academy, was one of the participants, and here is her say on the topic.

The event was introduced by Ambassador Apostolova.

**Women, technology, entrepreneurship... these terms seemed almost incompatible only a few years ago in Kosovo. How did you manage to make them coexist?**

My entrepreneurial experience started as a desire to contribute to improving education and educational opportunities that are relevant for our young generation. Being a computer science engineer, I have had the opportunity to work in the field and understand the power that creating with technology can bring. I am a mother of three daughters and it is important to me to give my children opportunities to prepare them for their future. Given that we live in the 21st century, where technology is at the core of most things we do, preparing children to use technology as a tool to create, feel and still feels like very relevant work. I started jCoders Academy, a company that offers programmes that teach programming languages, electronics and robotics to children, since to me any other route felt barricaded. Being able to run a purposeful business and drive its vision and mission is a big responsibility, and jCoders is about more than just profit. We are driven by the opportunities we can create for our children in the

future, and we continue to build new learning experiences, new tools to make learning technology a fun, engaging and relevant experience for children.

**Do you agree with the belief that women have to prove themselves twice as much as men in order to reach the same level in the business environment?**

It depends! I am aware that there are still working environments where the main decision makers are men, and this can make it difficult for women to advance their careers. It is still undeniable that there are gender stereotypes in the workplace. However, it is also my belief that not only men but also women think in stereotypes, and sometimes even limit themselves because they tend to fall into a certain stereotype. During the past five years of my entrepreneurial life, I have seen an increased interest in supporting women to be successful in the business environment, and that makes me really happy. We need diversity in our working environments, and this is not a necessity that is present because of equality, it is a necessity for productivity and business growth for any business that has an interest in being, and remaining, relevant in the markets they serve.

**What do you think a female manager can bring to a company or organisation or any other working environment?**

In my experience, working with both men and women, it is not gender that determines managerial qualities; it is the personalities and skills of the people that perform those roles. I would like to see more women believe in themselves that they can take on leadership roles. Much of the time, the limits that we think we have are only in our minds.

**Besides stereotypes, how could Kosovo make it easier for female entrepreneurs or female workers to further integrate in the labour market? Do you think laws need to change?**

Education, empowerment and role models. We need to talk more about the success of female entrepreneurs. We have to have higher expectations from women, and not to constrain them in what they can do. We also need women that are confident in what they are capable of and are bold enough to ask for opportunities. We need to see and hear more about the successes of women by showcasing their work and talking about their stories. Personally, I think that Kosovo is a great place for female entrepreneurs. The laws are women friendly, and they encourage and even require the participation of women in government and other public-related positions. The environment is also very supportive for women. I would say that, sometimes, all that separates us from an opportunity is the courage to go out there and give it a try.

**Do you feel that you are a pioneer in your field who has opened the door for other women to follow? Or, do you think you are just a 'one off' case and that women will continue struggling to achieve what they are capable of?**

I do not consider myself as a 'one off' case. I am the same as many other women out there. I am myself inspired by the achievement of other women in Kosovo. However, doing business is not an easy task; it requires vision, consistency, belief, teamwork, self-confidence and self-criticism, and I strongly believe that there are a lot of girls and women that are equipped for the task. Generally, I do not think we should fear failure. Failure is inevitable, but it also is not the end. We tend to forget that the number of chances we get in life does not depend on how many others give us, but how many we give ourselves.



### **Mentoring Our Future – a mentoring programme to help Kosovar students excel**

Mentoring Our Future (MoF) is a mentoring programme for Kosovar students. This programme already serves as a meeting point for professionals and a space for them to exchange professional experience. This networking mechanism provides a place for the community to communicate and benefit in different fields.

The founders of MoF, Bjondina Rexha and Vjosa Morina, offer us a glimpse of how the idea came about and to what extent the programme has had an effect on enrolled Kosovar students.

"We were having coffee one day at Dit' e Nat' and we were talking about our university years at the University of Pristina. We talked about how the university had a lot of students and how the professors could not pay attention to us individually, to help and guide us through achieving our goals. That is when we started sharing ideas on how we could create a tool that could give the students of Kosovo the opportunities that we didn't have. Based on this discussion, we shared experiences and searched online for different mechanisms that different states use. By bringing together information and potential ideas, piece by piece we started to put together the MoF programme. We weren't sure that this mentoring programme would work when we asked the Albanian-speaking professionals in our network to be a part of it voluntarily. To find out, we started writing to a lot of different profiles to see if we would get positive responses, and we were astonished at the result! That is how we knew we were going to make this work! It took us nearly one year to put everything together while consulting with a lot of the existing mentors of our programme as well", says Vjosa.

During 2018–2019, MoF launched the first round of the mentoring programme, with 43 students being mentored. After eight months of each student being supported by individual mentors and being part of the training, the initial transformations were noticeable.

"We are currently in the process of interviewing the student applicants for the second round of the programme. What we have noticed so far is that, this year, the applicants know more about our programme, either by hearing about someone who was in the first round, or by coming across it on social media. But, what strikes me more is that quite a few of them were waiting for the call to open since the first round, and they were cautious not to miss it. I feel that, within two years, we have established our position among young people. We are always trying to work more in order to ensure even more opportunities for students. We have been signing memorandums of understanding with different companies and organisations in Kosovo in order to offer our students internships, training and job opportunities within these partnered institutions. Vjosa and I have been building the MoF programme for two years on a voluntary basis, despite having a busy schedule with our regular jobs. The students we get to meet every day and their enthusiasm towards our programme are the reason we still continue with our programme", Bjondina Rexha adds.





JUNE 2019 – GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

## **JEHONA BINISHI HYSA: We need to prepare women from an early age to engage in the health system in Kosovo**

On 17 June, the EU Gender Talk 'Gender Mainstreaming in the Health Sector' took place at Europe House. The event was attended by representatives of the Ministry for Health, civil society organisations, international organisations and, importantly, by doctors and nurses.

The lively two-hour debate focused on questions like 'Are women-specific health needs sufficiently addressed in the healthcare institutions in Kosovo?' and 'How does the medical research consider gender differences?'

This discussion touched upon the gender aspects of healthcare, prevention and education. The participants elaborated on the challenges the Kosovo health sector is facing and how gender mainstreaming can help to improve women's wellbeing. According to the Kosovo country report 2019, around 20% of the population have

no access to health services due to extreme poverty. It was agreed that there are still many challenges ahead. While a poor healthcare system affects everybody, women are especially affected. The lack of proper assistance during childbirth or the need to dedicate resources and strategies to prevent cancers that affect women specifically, such as breast cancer, were discussed during the debate. The topic of selective abortions also came into the discussion, as well as the situation of women in decision-making positions at health institutions.

We interviewed Jehona Binishi Hysa, a gynaecologist and obstetrician working at Bahceci Special Hospital, and participant of our sixth EU Gender Talk, on gender in the health sector.

### Is the gender mainstreaming policy applied in the health institution you are working at?

In this regard, I can only speak on behalf of the institution where I work. This is a private institution where we receive patients and evaluate different problems they might have, especially when it comes to infertility (difficulties in getting pregnant naturally), and try to find a suitable solution. Our team is made up of mainly female medical staff in all areas, ranging from patient management and problem coordination to diagnostics and treatment procedure. This means that the integration of women in the institution is significantly higher than that of men, and their level of training by company managers in managing situations and dealing with patients is very high.

### In your opinion, to what extent is gender mainstreaming used in the public health sector in Kosovo, both at central and local level?

Gender mainstreaming in public health institutions, both locally and centrally, consists of integrating a gender perspective in cases of defined academic status which are indispensable to the relevant institutions or political circles, in order to meet and accommodate certain standards. In my personal opinion, in the public health sector in Kosovo we are seeing a relatively small number of women being involved in important leadership or decision-making positions.

### What are the biggest challenges to overcome to ensure better access to healthcare for women?

The biggest challenges in involving women in the healthcare system primarily consist of preparing women professionally in the field they want to work in, building up their confidence and self-esteem regarding their responsibilities. One must always bear in mind the implications of our surroundings and our mentality in discouraging women from taking on a particular responsibility. Women in Kosovo are often denied some responsibilities. Moral support, along with vocational training, would have a positive impact on a successful female approach, in this case to public health services. Another challenge remains financial support – if women had financial support, their motivation would be higher and they would excel more in their career.

### Comparing healthcare in private and in public health care institutions – in your opinion, how does each of them correlate with access to healthcare for women in particular?

Based on my experience, in private institutions the access to healthcare services is better and closer to what should be the norm, because the influx of patients seeking services is almost one fifth of the demand in public health services. It should be taken into account that private health services in Kosovo require the payment fees, and therefore the demand is lower due to the lack of individual health insurance. So, the financial element remains one of the key factors in the comparison between private and public health systems.

### What are the biggest health challenges for Kosovo women? Is there enough statistical data to support the research work and analysis?

In Kosovo, statistical data is non-existent when it comes to women and the health sector. We do not have statistics on certain health problems that take the lives of many women in Kosovo, such as breast cancer or cervical cancer. If data was available, we would be able to reduce the mortality rate of women who are diagnosed with such diseases and prevent future deaths in Kosovo. In my opinion, the lack of accurate data makes Kosovo women hesitant to engage in a health or management challenge.

### If you had the power to do so, how would you improve the healthcare system as a whole? And how would you improve the healthcare system, especially for women?

I would have started from primary and secondary schooling, raising awareness among young girls and teenagers about the responsibilities they could take on in the future. School subjects need to build confidence in women, so that they can do more in the future, follow their dreams and take their life in their own hands. Female teachers need to be better supported and support their students more to strengthen their skills. As for the healthcare system, exchange programmes are a great way for women in Kosovo to learn from international experts as well as gaining experience of other systems around Europe.



### Some fact and figures on Women and Health in Kosovo

Directly from the EU-funded Kosovo Gender Analysis

- More women work in health institutions than men. Gender-disaggregated data on occupations is lacking, but women professionals claim that management positions seem to be largely occupied by men.
- Access to healthcare can differ for women and men, including based on ethnicity and geographic location. Sociocultural boundaries and access to finances undermine women's access to health care.
- More women use pharmaceuticals without a prescription (17%) than men do (12%) and are more likely to accept using tranquilizers to relieve anxiety and stress. Social stigmas surrounding mental health, confidentiality concerns and inaccessible mental healthcare contribute to self-treating.
- While illegal and thus rarely disclosed, there is a belief that sex selective abortions still occur, favouring boys (110:100).
- Most sexually-active Kosovars (64%) do not use contraceptives. Few people seem to learn about contraceptive use in school, and teachers reportedly regularly bypass reproductive health education without teaching it. Some healthcare providers share inaccurate information on contraceptives



## JULY 2019 – WOMEN IN ARTS

### **ZANA HOXHA: I use theatre to advocate for social issues that focus on raising awareness around gender-based violence, human rights and diversity**

In July, the seventh EU Gender Talk, organised in the red-carpet area of PriFest - Pristina International Film Festival, tackled the issue of women in arts. The Talk was co-chaired by the Director of the Festival Vjosa Berisha and Reyes Charle, Gender Adviser to the EUSR. Film directors, actresses, painters, academics representatives of government and local level institutions discussed challenges and ways forward for women in arts. Participants agreed that stereotypes still prevail at the time of judging capacities, availability and influence, in the arts world, an area where talent should be the main criteria. The impact of the international MeToo movement, as well as the struggle of women artists to make a live from their own work was discussed. On a positive end, it was concluded that although faced with many challenges, Kosovo's women are making their way in the arts world in a resolute manner. Let us discover the story of Zana Hoxha, theatre director and founder and executive director of Artpolis NGO.

**Female artists in Kosovo are really making their way up steadily despite the general inequality in the environment. Is the world of arts, led by so much talent, better prepared to include women?**

You have raised an excellent point. Women are indeed making a strong impression in Kosovo arts even though this path was not a common one taken by others before. There was a lot resistance and reluctance to funding female artists' work from the management, and only in the past 10 years the situation has changed. I believe that the situation has changed because there was no way left for them to set us back, and because we have become a force to be reckoned with in the national and regional scenes. Nevertheless, a lot remains to be done. We are yet to achieve equal payment for the same work – it is an open secret that women are paid less for doing the same work as men; for example, female theatre directors are paid less than male theatre directors. Sexual harassment in the workplace remains an issue, as well as a lack of mechanisms that increase the diversity of women engaged in the art scene.

**Tell us a bit about your experience as a young female entrepreneur and as a talented woman in the culture industry. Do you think it was easier or more difficult for you to succeed than it would have been for a man?**

Unfortunately, I became quite aware of the inequalities at the beginning of my career as a theatre director and cultural manager. I was threatened physically by a theatre director/manager for not doing what he told me to do, I was verbally intimidated by a member of a political party for not staging a project created by his family member and I was bullied by fellow cultural managers because of my efforts to involve communities and youth in my work as an artist and manager. Nevertheless, by resisting, I became stronger and increased the level of my work as an artist and cultural manager, because I have a constant need to use my skills and art to bring change, inspire others and create a space for involvement. So far, I have directed and produced more than 20 performances that were presented in the biggest theatres in Kosovo and the Balkans (Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), and I have presented my works as an artist/activist/trainer elsewhere in USA, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. I was the Head of the Theatre Department of the SKENA UP Festival during 2004–2011, Artistic Director of Gjakova Professional Theatre during 2011–2014 and the Founder and Artistic Director of the biggest female artists and activists festival in the region, FEMART. I am an alumni of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) (the U.S. Department of State's professional exchange programme) and an award winning director. As an artist and activist, I use theatre to advocate for social issues that focus on raising awareness around gender-based violence, human rights and diversity.

**What do you think a female leader can bring to a company or organisation, especially in the artistic environment?**

From my personal experience and observation, I think that female leaders usually bring a lot of dedication and commitment. They have a tendency to treat artists as family members and create a working atmosphere that is productive and more transparent. Whenever there was a transparent process of hiring managers and female managers were hired due to a fair and not politically affiliated processes, these women have achieved change and increased the capacities of the institutions.

**What advice would you give to young female artists who would like to make a living from their artwork?**

I would like to share with them my life motto: Resist, inspire, create. RESIST every moment and every day, because your act of resistance will bring you to the place you want to be and it will shape your future. INSPIRE yourself through travelling, discovering great art, being critical and enjoying the moment. Inspire others with your work and engagement, because you learn a lot by giving. CREATE art that represents your beliefs and which makes your voice heard. Create good deeds and contribute to a better society.



### Prominent female artists from Kosovo

In Kosovo, the art scene is flourishing! The last two decades have proved that female artists in particular in Kosovo can excel in creating cultural and artistic productions. A lot of them have gone through struggles, faced obstacles and circumstances in which it has become quite hard to survive, and yet female artists in Kosovo continue to radiate and be outstanding in what they do, tackling the very core of life in Kosovo. Here are seven women who have been successful in the artistic world in Kosovo and abroad.

**Lendita Zeqiraj** is currently one of the best film directors in Kosovo. She is an amazing woman with an extensive scope of work in the world of cinematography. In 2014, she was declared 'National Filmmaker of the Year', and won the Annual Film Excellence Award for Cinematic Achievements by the Kosovo Ministry of Culture. Recently, her movie 'Aga's House' exceeded all expectations and was premiered at the acclaimed Karlovy Vary Film Festival.

**HAVEIT** is a one-of-a-kind artistic collective that shattered the artistic scene in Kosovo. The group consists of two pairs of sisters who tackle everyday problems via intense and wonderful performances using different artistic mediums. They started performing together back in 2011 and so far have taken part in exhibitions and residencies in Albania, Greece, North Macedonia and Sweden. To this day, they strive for equality. Some of their best-known performances include 'Use your mouth', 'There is no water but there are fountains' and 'Je suis glamour'.

**Antoneta Kastrati** is a Kosovar director–scriptwriter who deals with sensitive topics in her artistic creations. Her award-winning films have screened in festivals around the world, including Busan International Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival and Sarajevo Film Festival. She is best known for the provocative subject matter of her films and her bold approach to telling poignant stories. Her expertise has produced movies and documentaries such as 'Zand', 'She Comes in Spring', 'Robin', 'The Guardian', 'Laleh', 'The Kingdom of Cool', 'Weddings and Diapers'.

**Adriana Matoshi** is arguably the most acclaimed Kosovar actress of the moment. Adriana transforms herself in all the projects she performs, and gives life to every moment she appears on screen, starring in movies such as 'Martesa', 'Shipia e Agës', 'Zana', 'Fence', 'Babai' and so on. Charismatic and in high demand among the most famous Albanian and Kosovar directors, Matoshi has walked on red carpets at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival and Berlinale. At the Italian FilmLab Festival, she was awarded 'Best Actress'.

Known in the music world as ANDRRA, **Fatime Kosumi** is a wonderful musician and producer. Fatime, who is from Kosovo but now based in Germany, has touched prestigious scenes in Europe. In 2014, together with filmmaker Vincent Moon she travelled to different regions of Kosovo to find and record rhapsodies, sung by peasant women. The result was a short documentary, KANG E DEFA – Female Rhapsody in Kosova. ANDRRA's lyrics tell a fragment of their story and the story of many other women unable to pass down their stories other than through songs.

**Other names that are shining when it comes to artistic and cultural life are Majlinda Kelmendi, Shkurte Ramushi, Blerta Basholli, Aurita Agushi, Marigona Qerkezi, Elbenita Kojtazi, to name a few. Let us not forget big international names such as Dua Lipa, Rita Ora, Era Istrefi and Njomza, all of them originally from Kosovo.**



AUGUST 2019 - GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORTS

## **SHQIPE BAJÇINCA: Our society tends to discriminate against women in many areas of life and sport is no exception**

The eighth EU Gender Talk took place in August 2019 and was on the topic of 'Gender equality in sports'. Participants in the event included representatives from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport; the Olympic Committee of Kosovo; various sports federations; professors of physical education and sports; students in the field; professional sportswomen and veteran sportswomen.

The discussion focused on the issue of the under-representation of women in sports – be that in participation, management, education or coaching – and the importance of improving this situation. The debate also explored the reasons behind the present pay gap between sportsmen and sportswomen, and the unequal media coverage that they both receive. This situation

is not exclusive to Kosovo, but can be found all over the world, and tackling it will require the involvement of all areas of society, including sportsmen.

Despite the difficulties they face, women like Majlinda Kelmendi and Uta Ibrahim are reaching the highest levels in the world of sports and making Kosovo proud. Their success will certainly help to change the stereotype about how successful sportswomen from Kosovo can be.

Shqipe Bajcinca, a professor at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports at the University of Pristina, shared her views during the discussion. In this interview, she tells us more about women and the world of professional sports.

**What do you feel are the biggest challenges that women face in the world of sports? What are the obstructions, if any, preventing them from obtaining high-level managerial positions in professional sports, sports education and coaching?**

Our society tends to discriminate against women in many areas of life and sport is no exception. For women to be successful and empowered in sports, they usually have to work twice as hard as men do. Gender bias, nepotism, political interference and male-centred traditions are the main barriers for women. In my own experience, many times when I was due to make a career jump there would be a delay and the deadline would be missed. Then the position would be filled by someone else, usually a man.

**Does the institution you work for (the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports at the University of Pristina) contribute to the empowerment of women within the institution?**

The institution where I work, the Faculty of Education and Sports at the University of Pristina has a sanctioned discrimination against women at the start. The student admission quota are 100 men to 50 women. This policy has no justification at all. Even football is now also a women's sport.

**In your view, what needs to be done to improve gender equality in sports?**

The media could do a lot to improve equality simply by giving sportswomen the same amount of airtime and coverage as sportsmen. It is not enough to wait for an exceptional achievement, as in the case of Majlinda Kelmendi – the media should encourage and support sportswomen on a regular basis.

**What would be your advice for young women that want to become top sportswomen? What helped you in your success?**

My simple advice would be to follow your dreams! But I would also ask parents and family members to support young women at home and help them to pursue their dreams. I am glad that women are becoming more aware of the important role that physical activity plays in improving quality of life. They should be willing to work hard and not let themselves be discouraged by society or barriers, which can sometimes seem impossible to overcome.



### **Kosovo women, succeeding in sports**

**Majlinda Kelmendi** is the most famous judoka in Kosovo, having represented the country at the Rio Olympic Games in 2016 where she won a gold medal in the women's -52 kg category. Kelmendi began practicing the art of judo in 1999, in her hometown of Peja. In 2019 alone, Kelmendi won the Grand Prix in Tel Aviv, Grand Slam in Dusseldorf and won challenges in Minsk and Tokyo. Having in mind she is just 28, Majlinda is a pure example of a woman who works hard to succeed and promises a bright future ahead of her.

**Nora Gjakova** is a Kosovo Albanian judoka. She won two Continental Opens in 2015, in Tunis and Lisbon. Coached by Driton Kuka, Gjakova has won 11 World Cup medals in total. On 21 April 2016, she won a bronze medal at the 2016 European Judo Championships in Kazan, Russia.

**Distria Krasniqi** is a Kosovan judoka who won a medal at the 2019 World Judo Championships. Krasniqi also won the Judo Grand Prix Antalya in 2018 and 2019. She took gold at the Grand Prix The Hague in 2017 as well as bronze in 2018, and she won the Grand Prix in Samsun in 2015. Distria is only 24 years old.

**Uta Ibrahim** is the first Albanian woman to climb Mount Everest. Through her alpinism activities, and media appearances, Uta seeks to raise awareness about nature, the mountains, and human rights particularly in Kosovo and Albania. In the course of four years she has climbed some of the highest peaks of the world: Musala 2,925m (Bulgaria), Olimpi 2,918m (Greece), Ercyes 3,916m (Turkey), Mount Hasan 3,200m (Turkey), Emler 3,500m (Turkey), Mont Blanc 4,880m (France), Monch 4107 (Swiss), Mount Rainier 4392m (USA), Yalung Peak 5,700m, Nuru Peak 5,800m, Ramdung Peak 5,925m, Labuche 6119, Island 6189m, Ama Dablam 6812m.



## SEPTEMBER 2019 - ECOFEMINISM, WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### **BLERTA AVDILI: If we want to be liberated from men, we must stop thinking like men!**

The ninth EU Gender Talk on 'Ecofeminism, women and the environment' took place on 19 September at Europe House within the framework of the Kosovo Sustainable Development Week. A panel of four experts in anthropology, bioeconomy and gender equality addressed an audience of 50 representatives of civil society and women's rights organisations, international organisations, academia and Kosovo institutions. The discussion focused on how the present social and political structures make women more vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, and at the same time, how women can make a difference by triggering changes in policies for the protection of the environment. Inequalities in society, including gender inequality, contribute to environmental issues affecting people differently. During the discussion, food waste management was analysed as an income-generating opportunity, and ecofeminist initiatives in other countries were discussed as possible inspiration for

Kosovo. In conclusion, participants agreed that individual decisions contributing to the protection of the environment should be matched with public policies in the same direction. Blerta Avdili, an anthropologist and women's rights activist and panellist at the EU Gender Talk, shares with us her stance on ecofeminism, environmental concerns and how the government could bring environmental issues to the top of the political agenda.

#### **What is ecofeminism?**

Ecofeminism refers to indivisibility between women's and environmental rights – not only the analogy between the exploitation of female or feminine bodies, but also women's rights at the expense of environmental rights. Environmental destruction and social injustice have a common cause that stems from hierarchical thinking, which is the domination of one person over another, a black and white way of thinking that has become embedded in society due to heteronormative hegemony.

Ecofeminism is the space where the separation of human beings from nature (or being superior to nature) is annihilated. Instead, humans are recognised as being a part of nature, and have to learn how to be in harmony with nature to be in harmony with themselves.

### **What would you say to people who think that Kosovo is still not ready for women's rights or environmental protection, and argue that there are more relevant issues to be solved?**

To address environmental destruction, we must challenge hierarchical frameworks and ways of thinking. Furthermore, to address environmental injustices we must address social injustices, since the destruction of the environment and the oppression of vulnerable groups comes from the same mindset and systems. The subjugation of women and nature is a social construct, not a biological one. Aside from social abuse, women suffer under patriarchy. Women are more susceptible to biological issues which accompany a polluted environment. The ecological impact on women affects childbearing. Air, soil, and water toxicity have detrimental consequences for women and children. Miscarriage, congenital disabilities, disease and infertility are only some of the outcomes of a toxic environment. After explaining the above, I would ask these people, what is more relevant and essential than the water that we drink, the air that we breathe, and the food that we eat? Then, I would repeat that these are precisely those relevant issues that have to be solved.

### **Tell us a bit more about what being an activist for women's rights and the environment involves.**

Talking to people in order to shape the political debate and change perceptions so that women in the environment become visible is the most crucial thing for ecofeminism and eco-queer activism.

### **What can we do to contribute to an environmentally friendly Kosovo and how can the women's rights movement help?**

There is a risk that ecofeminism will become the middle ground that connects gender and 'pinkwashing' with 'greenwashing', and if that happens, this movement will be nothing more than another

block in an already obstructed place. The women's rights movement in Kosovo must re-evaluate itself by recognising that the process of self-destruction is manifested through its counterpart, which is the process of infinite growth, reproduction, and resource exhaustion. This is demonstrated in capitalism. The cause of female exploitation has never been patriarchy. The problem is the 'archy' of patriarchy, which is the domination of one person over another. So, we should strive for the equality of intelligence, moving beyond gender and the domination of those who know over those who do not. "Women want to be equal to men. Women want to be considered equally as intelligent as men. Women do not want to be on the submissive side, having things explained by men." We have heard all of this from feminist groups today. However, the same women accept the inequality of intelligence amongst human beings, which then paradoxically accepts the domination of other human beings, species, and the earth! Ignorance should be inferior to knowledge: knowledge should dominate. Women need to be able to liberate themselves from men's suppression to free themselves from the male logic of equality of knowledge. If we want to be liberated from men, we must stop thinking like men! When women take the realm of domination by men, they become worse than men. This is also known as male logic. Therefore, by not falling into the traps of male logic, and becoming consumers of systems that destroy the earth and the people on it, not only can the women's rights movement help, but it can lead the fight towards a radical and evolutionary change for all.

### **How do you think the government could bring environmental issues to the top of the political agenda?**

By adopting the ten principles of Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace. However, the chances of that happening are extremely small. Therefore, the only way that the government can really bring environmental issues to the top of the political agenda is by imposing the EU's restrictive measures on gender mainstreaming in Kosovo as an aspiring EU member.



### **The Kosovo Sustainable Development Week**

The Kosovo Sustainable Development Week is a platform for officials, representatives of civil society, the donor community, national and international experts, and the academia to discuss about issues related to sustainable development with a focus on environmental and energy problems in Kosovo and the region.

Given the remarkable success and wide impact of this event last year, and the requests from participants, it was concluded that KSDW should become an annual undertaking.

The European Union is strongly committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable development is part of our identity and it will guide our future. The structure presented by Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen shows that she is following through on her climate and environmental promises by giving the highest level of attention to delivering on a European Green Deal. Climate action and environmental protection is mainstreamed throughout all relevant sectors, such as agriculture, energy and transport.

Here in Kosovo I have to remind you:

Sustainable development is also about Kosovo's European Integration. Kosovo needs to urgently re-focus its attention on effective and urgent measures which have a major impact on the health and wellbeing of the population. The EU published the Kosovo Report 2019 in May where the chapter on Environment and Climate change remains particularly concerning. The EU remains deeply worried about the very slow progress. Kosovo on its European path will have to come closer to EU standards and long term strategy goals.

Sustainable development is a precondition for political, economic and social stability. There is no stability and progress without a clean and safe environment, steady energy supply and a healthy population. Kosovo's natural resources are limited and it is evident that they are not used in a sustainable way! Preserving the environment is about preserving Kosovo, it is about taking care of the present and the future.



OCTOBER 2019 – WOMEN AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

## **EDI GUSIA: Gender equality is a precondition for good governance**

A worthy discussion on the women and good governance occurred at the 10th. EU Gender Talk, which took place in October. Representatives of the Agency for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Local Government and NGOs got engaged in a two-hour debate focused on the importance of the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality in all spheres of life. In relation to the electoral process, the legal quotas established in the laws was touched upon. The value of having women involved in governance and how their presence is essential to institution building was largely discussed. Participants also emphasised the need for inclusion of women in policy and decision making processes within the Kosovo administration, both on central and local level. One of the panelists, Edi Gusia, Chief Executive Officer of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, shares more on the link between women and good governance.

### **What do you think women can bring to Governance? Is there a woman's way of managing within government organisations?**

Gender equality is a precondition for good governance, and it is achieved by ensuring equal participation of women in public-political life. If we aim at building an open and democratic society, this cannot be achieved unless we listen to the voice of women, unless we look at their perspective on issues of state building and democracy in the spirit of legislation guaranteeing fundamental human rights - equal participation. Women in Kosovo, despite their extraordinary intellectual, professional and spiritual capacity, are often left on the margins of decision-making, not because of their lack of capacities, but because of a challenging mindset with many gender stereotypes that have prevented them from being part of decision-making as they deserve it. Generations of women who have been engaged in public life in all domains, as well as in politics, carry from generation to generation this creative energy of the Kosovar woman, who with work and dedication, create, manage and build the future. Even though they still face multiple gender stereotypes, they arrive every day with their

professional commitment,. Their small victories is opening the way for thousands of young girls, who with their commitment, passion for creation, and the will to challenge the mentality, will bring prosperity, peace and welfare to Kosovo.

**How do you think quotas are helping women in Kosovo to advance in political representation and how do you see the future? What do you think it has to change for more women to stand up for elections in Kosovo and for women to be equally represented?**

An important prerequisite for the introduction of quotas was that Kosovo had and has a vibrant and active civil society in the field of gender equality,. At the beginning of institutional building we had tremendous support from international organisations and missions that brought valuable experiences and supported the advancement in the gender equality agenda in the country. The values and principles of gender equality, which are an integral part of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, as part of a significant number of international conventions on human rights and gender equality - as CEDAW, demonstrated the readiness for an advanced legal framework, which aims to create the space for action and respect for the equal rights of men and women in Kosovo. The adoption of the first gender equality law was one of the major achievements of the establishment of democratic institutions, and holding elections in the spirit of this law proved that affirmative action is necessary to bring the women viewpoint into focus on the future of the country. The quota brought positive results, from encouraging women and girls to see politics as an area of their interest where they can contribute much, as they have throughout history, but also challenged the mentality that women were left outside the politics. In the last two rounds of elections more than half of women MPs have become part of the Assembly with their votes, and this is the biggest achievement of the affirmative-quota measure. Moreover, if the quota had been implemented in its entirety, the Assembly would have had equal representation of both genders in the last two legislatures.

**Which part of the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality you feel more proud of? Which provisions are being more difficult to implement?**

For a short period of time we as institutions have put in place an institutional mechanism for gender equality at the highest level of decision-making - the Agency for Gender Equality within the Office of the Prime Minister, as requested by the Beijing

Platform, and a network of Gender Equality Officers in Ministries and Municipalities. This is an advanced model, which already serves as a model in the region and beyond. It is true that this gender mechanism is constantly challenged, but we must bear in mind that it requires time and dedication, establishing an adequate sustainable monitoring model, political support on a continuous basis to see and value both, results and lessons learnt. And we have concrete results in this regard.: Drafting of a significant number of legal acts ranging from domestic violence to access to services and care for survivors of sexual violence from the war, , the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2023, which after its adoption will serve institutions, civil society, international and local partners as a common working platform for coordination and action, This legal framework, and the gender mechanism as advanced as it is, is as complex and is affected and challenged by the political dynamics in the country, and beyond, but more importantly, is that the institutional practice is established and functioning, and is clear that the implementation of this legal framework is a precondition for the rule of law and peace building.

**As one of the few women with a director position in Kosovo administration, what would you recommend to other women who want to follow your example? What do you think the government need to do to have more women applying and for higher level positions within Kosovo public administration and succeed?**

The government and the Assembly should introduce more laws addressing the issue of people with special needs, with an intention of having them implemented. Without having a proper and applicable law on people with special needs in Kosovo, these people will continue to face the same problems. All problems the government need to tackle should be foreseen in the law, so that we see changes in the long term. If I was in a decision making position, I would introduce a special law that would encompass infrastructure, the labour market and education for people with special needs, as well as a yearly state campaign to raise awareness and promote the integration and equal rights of people with special needs within society.



### **Champions of gender equality at the Ministry of Local Government Administration**

Rozafa Ukimeraj is the Secretary General in the Ministry of Local Government Administration since 2016. Under her leadership, gender equality has made a steady progress within the organisation of the Ministry as well as at the level of the municipal governments and assemblies, which the Ministry oversees. With encouraging policies aim at making the recruitment of women a reality, the MLGA is today the only ministry that has achieved 50% representation of women and meant all levels of the mid-senior management and senior management.

At municipal level, even though the 38 Mayors are men, there are more women directors in relation to the 2013 municipal governments (18,5%). Furthermore, three municipalities, Glogoc, Kamenica and Kllokot have equal number of the women and men directors, which never happened before. There are also 6 women chairpersons of Municipal Assemblies.

In addition, for the first time, the MLGA placed special attention on monitoring the equal gender representation of the two mandatory (and the only ones remunerated!) committees of the Municipal Assemblies: The Committee for Policy and Finances and the Committee for Communities. On the process of establishing the 78 committees in all the municipalities after 2017 elections, 31 decisions were sent back for review by the MLGA to ensure their compliance with the Law on Gender Equality, which foresees equal representation for each gender. 25 decisions were then reviewed and complied, but the 6 municipalities that did not comply were referred to the Ministry of Justice, so that the competent court could deal with it. This was a pioneer decision as it was the first time that the Law on Gender Equality served as basis to censure decisions of the municipalities as contrary to gender equality.





## NOVEMBER 2019 – GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

### **TIJANA SIMIC: Gender-based violence is a systemic issue that requires a systematic approach**

Ahead of the 16-day activism campaign to end violence against women, on 19 November, the 11th EU Gender Talk took place on the topic of 'Gender-based violence' at Europe House in North Mitrovica. The Head of the EU Office in Kosovo and EU Special Representative Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova delivered the opening remarks, pointing out the need for everybody to contribute to ending violence against women and reiterating that gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. The outgoing Minister of Local Government explained the northern municipalities' plans to open a safe house for victims of gender-based violence with the involvement of representatives of NGOs. It was agreed that both public institutions and civil society organisations have a role to play in the fight against violence and to protect victims of gender-based violence. Participants thanked the EU for providing a platform for the community to debate.

In this interview, Tijana Simic, a women's rights activist from North Mitrovica discusses the need to apply international standards and best practices for the protection of victims of gender-based violence.

#### **How different is being a woman in Kosovo to being a man? Stereotypes of what is expected from a woman in Kosovo are still a reality – are things changing?**

Despite comprehensive laws, the oppressed position of women in Kosovo society has been evident through the high rates of sex trafficking, poor economic status of women, as well as gender-based and domestic violence. Women in Kosovo have fewer opportunities than men. They are less likely to inherit property than men, own a business, or climb the social ladder. Kosovo society is deeply rooted in traditional gender norms. Women who work are expected to take care of the household chores as well, whether they are married or living in their parental home. So, they have to work twice as much and earn less. Those that

do climb higher than most women eventually hit the glass ceiling, regardless of their educational and professional skills. However, there has been some progress. The best example of such development is the percentage of votes that the Prime Minister candidate Ms Vjosa Osmani received in the past elections. Just 20 years ago, it was unimaginable to have a female leader with such support from Kosovo citizens. This is progress; however, one or two examples of successful women should not be interpreted as equal opportunities between men and women.

**Gender-based violence is a worrying phenomenon which goes largely unreported in Kosovo, despite recent institutional and legislative changes. New technologies and social realities have brought about different forms of sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, etc. What else can be done to raise awareness among young people? Are young men and women in Kosovo ready to change that reality?**

Because of deeply rooted traditional gender norms, gender-based violence is still socially acceptable. Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of gender-based violence in Kosovo, and still socially perceived as a family matter. However, young people are more likely to recognise such violence than their grandmothers or even their mothers at that age. The violence is underreported because of the lack of trust in institutions. We need a system that will respond to such violence adequately. The legislation has been recently amended to incorporate other forms of violence. Therefore, awareness raising among the institutions and the general public about trafficking, sexual harassment, gender harassment, arranged marriage and gender discrimination is imperative. General services (e.g. police, prosecution, court, social welfare services, and hospitals) need continuous training sessions and specialised service providers (e.g. female-led NGOs) need effective support from the state and local self-governance. It is fundamental to distinguish the roles of the state, local authorities, institutions, and female-led organisations in combating gender-based violence as per the Istanbul Convention. This is the way to efficiently and effectively address this social issue.

**What can be done in Kosovo to better protect victims of gender-based violence?**

Gender-based violence is a systemic issue that requires a systematic approach. To provide better protection, the norms

need to be tackled at the same time in the family, schools, religious institutions, media, and other social and governmental institutions. The relevant laws must be aligned with the Convention. There should also be an effective government and institutional accountability mechanism for human rights violations, such as an Ombudsperson for gender-based and domestic violence. Furthermore, general service providers should receive continuous training. Additionally, specialised service providers (female-led NGOs) should be recognised and supported as a fundamental link in the chain for combating gender-based and domestic violence at both central and local level.

**Do women from minority communities face more difficulties than other women in relation to protection from gender-based violence in Kosovo?**

Intersectionality is a phenomenon that affects all societies, both developed and developing ones. Kosovo is a specific case because of its post-conflict background, but also due to the sensitive political situation. Overall, the rates of gender-based and domestic violence are high among all ethnic groups, and there is a lack of adequate services by general service providers, as well as a lack of funding of specialised services by central and local governments. However, intersectionality affects minority women to a greater extent. For example, we had cases where Serbian women could not file for a divorce or custody, or could not visit their children because they got married and gave birth in the Serbian system after 1999. Also, when Serbian police officers were integrated into the Kosovo system, the percentage of policewomen in the primarily Serbian municipality significantly dropped. Therefore, women in those municipalities are now less likely to receive support from a female police officer when reporting domestic, gender or sexual violence. Additionally, Roma women are historically the most marginalised social group in Kosovo. Such marginalisation has led to less educational and employment opportunities, high rates of gender-based and domestic violence, early and arranged marriages, as well as human trafficking of family members.



## UN WOMEN, a reliable partner of the EU in Kosovo

UN WOMEN is one of the most reliable partners of the EU in Kosovo. Led by director Vlora Nushi, who despite her hectic schedule found time to attend many of the EU Gender Talks, the agency plays an invaluable role in giving visibility to gender inequalities in Kosovo, therefore contributing to the transformation of stereotypes and perceptions. This year was not an exception. The **Security and Gender Group (SGG)**, a multi-stakeholder group, chaired by UN WOMEN which brings together national and international partners, organised more than 100 activities and actions on the occasion of the 16 days of Activism against violence against women, including the impressive lighting in orange of the renowned architectural treasure of Kosovo, the National Library.

The EU-funded regional program 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds', which aims at ending gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey (with a total budget of 5,681,220.39) has been successfully implemented by UN WOMEN in Kosovo for the last three years. Focusing on the most disadvantaged groups of women, the program is contributing to strengthen women's organisations capacity to hold governments to account, advocate for effective implementation, and monitor prevention of and response to violence against women.

Through the program, the work of UN WOMEN has been crucial for the set-up and consolidation of the Office of the National Coordination for Domestic Violence, the establishment of an integrated data base for cases of domestic violence and the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding among Kosovo institution for the protection, prevention and response to violence, as well as for the access to comprehensive, multi-sectoral services for survivors.





DECEMBER 2019 – RELIGION FOR PEACE

## **MIMOZA GAVRANI: If we apply supportive policies towards empowering women we will win in many aspects**

'EU Gender Talk' on Religion for Peace was held on the 12th of December 2019, marking the 12th and the last in the series of EU Gender Talks during 2019. Representatives of different religious groups in Kosovo, including the Islamic Community and the Catholic Church, among others took part in a productive roundtable. Representatives from different Kosovo communities were also in attendance. The discussion went into sharing the role of women in the different monotheist religions present in Kosovo. The power of women as peacemakers and mediators in times

of need was emphasised. The role of religious leaders in peace and reconciliation process was also discussed.

Participants agreed that despite the recent history, in Kosovo, all religious groups have coexisted together for many years.

Mimoza Gavrani, director at Kosovo Advocacy Group – KAG, one of the participants, shares her story with us.

**According to you, what role do women play today in Kosovo in terms of religious coexistence and religious communities in Kosovo?**

I grow up as modern Muslim, where my grandfather and my parents thought me to be thankful for what you have: Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough. With a liberal approach to religion, I believe that it is important to have equal access and inclusiveness, especially for women of all communities. But she (I) says that women and girls in communities must be empowered, especially in bringing peace as a platform of dialogue, need to be well-prepared and knowledgeable before embarking on such a challenge, to be successful and not just to participate but also be change makers when it comes to decision making processes, then we can call it a CHANGE.

**What do you do as KAG to promote religion and peace in Kosovo?**

I have been an active member of civil society for 14 years and a lobbyist for human rights and women's rights in particular. Kosovo Advocacy Group KAG (Kosovar Advocacy Group) is a think tank that aims to advocate for active citizenship, monitoring local and central policies for the position of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities through research, analysis and media presence. Gavrani is the author and creator in 2017 of his own television program format, "Mimoza", which is broadcast on Kosovo national television-RTK, and presents the idea of applying the media as a tool to raise awareness of topics of social impact in Kosovo. This is a unique program initiated, initiated and managed by a minority woman in the Balkan region. With all of the aforementioned profile elements, Gavrani aims to pave the way for future women and show the value of professionalism that

will play an essential role in framing further developments as a unique figure and improving the potential of gender equality in the Balkans.

**Do you think that women can express their religious beliefs freely in Kosovo, women of all religious beliefs and backgrounds?**

Yes. Kosovo is a new and growing country, ready to learn and move forward. It has also proved acceptance, embracement and tolerance in religious beliefs.

**Who are the women leaders, theologians and activists in existing religious communities in Kosovo?**

I think that if we apply supportive policies towards empowering women we will win in many aspects. I don't mean just equal opportunities, for instance, only in applying for a job. If the state and society have only invested in men and the family invested in men, that's not good enough. I aim to continue working hard to fight for women's access to education, women from the village, survivors of sexual violence — there have been some historical injustices towards women in Kosovo, which I want to address directly.

**Should women and girls be more integrated within the interfaith dialogue in Kosovo?**

Absolutely, for both genders it is important to support generations on growing and facilitating the climate of breaking down cultural, ethничal and political barriers.



**Religious groups coexist and manifest happily in Kosovo**

Three religions – Islam, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism, have long coexisted in Kosovo. For years now, in this society these religious and their preachers live and manifest themselves freely.

The Constitution establishes Kosovo as a secular state that is neutral in matters of religious beliefs and where everyone is equal before the law and freedom to belief, conscience and religion is guaranteed. The law stipulates there is no official religion, but it lists five "traditional" religious communities: Muslim, Serbian Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Hebrew (Jewish), and evangelical Protestant. The law provides extra protections and benefits to these five groups, including reduced taxes.

According to Pew Research Center's 2015 study, in 2010 Kosovo had 93.8% Muslims and 6.1% Christians; all other religious groups and the unaffiliated each had less than 1%.

A significant proportion of Muslims are only nominally so; many do not regularly attend mosque services, although fasting for Ramadan is widely practiced.

Christianity probably reached Kosovo in the 5th century as the Roman Empire gradually split into a Greek East and Latin West. Kosovo became part the former, known as the Byzantine Empire, and thus fell into the sphere of the Orthodox Church based in Constantinople.

The Serb population is largely Serbian Orthodox, and primarily concentrated in North Kosovo, though a few enclaves exist elsewhere. The Catholic Albanian communities are mostly concentrated in Gjakova, Prizren, Klina and a few villages near Peć and Vitina (see Iaramans). Slavic-speaking Catholics usually call themselves Janjevci or Kosovan Croats. Slavic-speaking Muslims in the south of Kosovo are known as the Gorani people.

The presence of Serbian Orthodox bishops in Lipljan and Prizren was first recorded in the 10th century.

Cathedral of Saint Mother Teresa, Kosovo's main Roman Catholic Church, stands firmly and looks beautifully right in the center of Pristina – the capital city of Kosovo.



# WHAT WOMEN IN EU INSTITUTIONS SAY

## Women at the EU: The progressive narrative they share on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Strong women who worked or are still working at the EU institutions have their say in regards to gender equality and women empowerment.



"I realised that being relatively young and a woman matches two elements of prejudice that are extremely difficult to face if combined together. I think women in power have this first responsibility and we all have this first responsibility of being a role model for our girls and young women around the world, telling them that if a man can do it, you can do it too, be it a football player, a film director, the CEO of an enterprise, a Defence Minister, a President. The sky is the limit. If a man can do it, for sure you can do it; I do not say better than him, but you can do it at least as a man can do it"

**Federica Mogherini**

Former EU High Representative/ Vice-President of the EU Commission



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"It is important not to see women primarily or only as mothers, as it is often done.

Gender equality has to be achieved by both education and law. Simply asking for volunteering and good will has not produced any results yet."

**Ska Keller**

Member of the European Parliament, Alliance 90/The Greens



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"Since 1958, there have been 183 Commissioners. Only 35 were women. That is less than 20%. We represent half of our population. We want our fair share. I am [a candidate] thanks to all those women that broke barriers and conventions. I am so thanks to those who built a Europe of peace, a united Europe, a Europe of values"

**Ursula von der Leyen**

President of the European Commission





**"Women are equally good fighters, we are courageous, protective when needs be, we are stubborn, we wish to prove what we can do and that we are right. But with our voices and our femininity, we do not push ourselves to the forefront the same way that men do.**

**I truly hope that, as the society, we can overcome the prejudice against successful women in leadership positions"**

**Tanja Fajon**

Member of the European Parliament, Social Democrats



**"All women risk violence at some point in their life, be it at home, work, school or in public spaces. Yet it remains a taboo topic. This required dedicated effort, so I made 2017 'Year of Focused Actions to Combat Violence Against Women.'**

**This aimed to educate and raise awareness, encourage national and cross-border collaboration and make a concrete impact through funding grassroots projects"**

**Věra Jourová**

Vice-President for Values and Transparency in the European Commission



**"It is normal to be different. I will not hide that fact that I am a lesbian, because I want to live a life free from fear and danger of being blackmailed. My visibility, activism and work have empowered many a lesbian but also gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex person. Visibility (and legal equality) reduce fear in peoples' lives"**

**Ulrike Lunacek**

Former Member of the of the Greens/European Free Alliance at the European Parliament from 2009 until 2017. Former rapporteur for Kosovo

"Madeleine Albright used to say there is a special place in hell for women who do not support women. I believe this also goes for men. In one country where I was serving as EU Ambassador I went to see all leaders of all parties prior to the parliamentary elections. All men. And I asked them how many women they would put on their candidates lists. The standard reply was: most likely 'none'. When I asked 'why' they would say: 'Otherwise, we will lose the elections'. Now this was almost ten years ago. But sadly, it is true that women in politics or other decision making positions still do not have their rightful place. I am proud that our new European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has asked European leaders to come forward with women candidates. She made everybody think twice and act more. That is what is needed"

**Angelina Eichhorst**

Acting MD Europe Central Asia, DMD/Director Western Europe, the Western Balkans, Turkey | European External Action Service

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"In the European Union year to end violence against women, the European Commission is pleased to partner with UN Women to step up efforts to end violence against women in Western Balkan countries and Turkey. We will work together to support national governments and civil society, to accelerate protection, prevention and response to violence against women"

**Genoveva Ruiz Calavera**

Director for the Western Balkans at the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission

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**"There is no way for any society to prosper without tapping into the talent of all its people – men and women. It's very simple, if you ignore part of your capabilities, you come up short in terms of economic achievements"**

**Kristalina Georgieva**

Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund





"I think the problem, to a very large degree, is that women are expected to be men. When you find toughness in female leaders, it's because there are too few of them and they really have to work for it, in a very stereotypical male way. I think there could be a real generational gift to all the children being born now - to have a closer relationship with their fathers, because it is still the case that in many families, the woman is the primary caregiver. This is not to say that the father should be the mother, but if they had the opportunity to spend more time with the children, they would obviously develop a different relationship. That would then allow women to be more 'on the job', so to speak, because you would also have a different division of labour in the home"

**Margrethe Vestager**

Executive Vice-President of the European Commission  
for a Europe fit for the Digital Age (Competition)

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"As leaders, we have to create the conditions allowing our staff, whether men or women, to develop their full potential and reach their career goals. Achieving gender equality requires more than boosting female recruitment; we must encourage our female staff members to take the steps necessary to advance their careers. It is our role to foster cultural change in our organizations and make sure that our internal policies protect our diversity"

**Catherine de Bolle**

Executive Director, Europol

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"If women can enjoy a more secure right to land, they can improve their ability to exercise both 'voice' and 'choice' in decisions that affect the use and control of their own land and/or community land. Meaningful participation must, however, go beyond women's simple presence at meetings: meaningful participation includes women having both the space and knowledge to speak safely and the confidence and capacity to defend their rights. The more women are informed of their rights, the more they are able to participate"

**Mara MARINAKI**

Senior Gender Adviser, European External Action Service (EEAS)



# SUPPORTING WOMEN LEADERS

# Women in Politics – confidence, influence and effective leadership. Twenty-seven women being inspired to lead, influence and impact Kosovo politics. Each of them has a say.

Governments are responsible to ensure that women are given the opportunity to participate equally in all decision-making levels and that the institutions reflect a variety of people and communities that they represent. The need of empowering women and increasing their participation in decision-making is foreseen within the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by United Nation's General Assembly in 1979.

"...shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government..." Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The European Union (EU) has a variety of policies in place that support women's political and civic engagement, to promote women in decision-making and end the underrepresentation of women. The Pietikainen Report of the European Parliament invites EU institutions (the Council, the Commission) and national EU governments to design and implement effective gender equality policies and multifaceted strategies for achieving parity in participation in political decision-making and

leadership at all levels, and welcoming gender quotas for elections. Other policies, such as the Commission's Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019, also mention the need to improve the gender balance in political decision-making and to continue to encourage and support national government's activities promoting gender balance in political and public decision-making positions. In Kosovo women participation in decision-making continues to be low despite legal and institutional reform in Kosovo in recent years. The Law No. 05/L -020 on Gender Equality, article 6, point 8, states that "equal gender representation in all legislative, executive and judiciary bodies and other public institutions is achieved when ensured a minimum representation of fifty percent (50%) for each gender, including their governing and decision-making bodies". Nevertheless, neither central nor local institutions fully enforce the Law on Gender Equality (LGE). Traditional values, gender-based violence, social exclusion, discrimination, poverty, low participation of women in decision-making, low participation of women in the labour force, very limited access to properties and economic resources are some of the main factors that undermine the de facto gender equality in Kosovo, resulting among others, with low participation of women in political life from where they would be able to address some of the most pressing issues for the society.

## The 2018 Gender Analysis[1] states: Governance and Democracy

- Women, including ethnic minority women, remain underrepresented as elected officials in municipal assemblies (35%) and the parliament (32%); as civil servants in senior decision-making positions at municipal (20%) and national levels (27%); in political posts such as heads of parties, ministers (2 of 21) and mayors (0 of 38); and in dialogue and negotiations.
- Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is not yet fully institutionalized, despite improvements, such as regular mention of GRB in budget circulars, submission of gender-disaggregated data by several ministries and

municipalities and some officials' improved knowledge about GRB in recent years. As mentioned above, regardless of the already accepted institutional changes and measures, the current situation of gender equality is more de jure than de facto. Overall, Kosovo Women face a unique set of challenges when progressing into political senior positions, including unconscious bias a scarcity of role models, and a peer group that continually shrinks the more senior they become. These can make striving for the top a lonely and frustrating endeavour. The under-representation of women in politics constitutes a

serious democratic deficit in Kosovo, which undermines the legitimacy of the contemporary democratic system and violates Human Rights. Parity democracy and the promotion of women in decision-making positions are therefore important areas of action for the EUSR. Parity democracy implies the equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions. It goes a step further than quotas as it is based on the idea that women are not a minority: they represent more than half of humanity – a quantitative dimension – and one of its components – a qualitative dimension.

## Objective of the project

Increasing women's participation in public and political life is a key element to the development and democratization of a country. Women constitute half of the population, and balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making is a determinant of a better functioning of a democratic society. Support, growth and development are essential for all leaders, but gendered differences create unique challenges for women, e.g.

1. Confidence: women - for a variety of highly rational reasons - have more doubts putting themselves up for election
2. Candidate selection: once women agree to run, it's often difficult for them to get an electable spot on the election list.
3. Culture: politics is a men's world. Sexism is rampant and external threats - women - are often not welcome.
4. Cash: when women run for election, their campaigns often receive less funding than their male counterparts
5. Childcare: women spend much more time on childcare compared to men

This initiative builds skills and mindsets to succeed and creates a platform for participants to engage with a network of peers and senior mentors. Participants develop confidence, influence and effective leadership strategies. Firstly, a five-day leadership training was held. It blended elements of personal self-discovery, practical skills and leadership strategies to master challenges in the workplace and public life (incl. political parties and offices) to join the ranks of senior leaders in their respective agencies or political parties. The training was organized in Pristina in English language.

**On February 2019, the EU in Kosovo engaged with 12 women politicians willing to upgrade, enhance and strengthen their skills, techniques and confidence for standing and running up for political and public posts both at central and municipal level in Kosovo.**

The project follows an inclusive approach and therefore it includes actions within two different pillars:

- Leadership training, coaching and networking for women with proven potential
- Workshop on Gender policies in political parties

During the training a personalized learning and roadmap was developed for each participant followed by coaching sessions. The coaching sessions were provided to all the women individually in English language. A series of individual coaching sessions helped each participant to overcome the identified professional and personal challenges. Secondly, a workshop with representatives of political parties resulted in new awareness and skill set of politicians that will enable women to take part in the public life in new, more effective ways. Thirdly, a networking event was organized in Brussels. It was a study visit for the 12 women that have attended the training. This one-day networking event was a wonderful opportunity for them to meet with prominent women from the EU Commission, the EU Parliament and the European Women's Lobby. The networking allowed the women to establish contacts and future cooperation in the field of gender equality. All in all the timeline of the project happened between March and December 2019. 27 women being inspired to lead, influence and impact Kosovo politics, chosen for the project are:

Dafina Alishani, Valdete Bajrami, Venera Goxha, Adea Batusha, Flutura Beka Kamberaj, Hatixhe Hoxha, Rina Domi, Leonora Morina Bunjaku, Valdete Idrizi, Linda Shahini, Nazlie Bala, Aida Dërguti, Vlora Hoti, Time Kadrija, Gentiana Begoll, Vlera Kastrati, Marigona Berisha, Danijela Vujicic, Ivana Vukasinovic, Jovana Radosavljevic, Bokurie Gjonbalaj, Teuta Hoxha Jahaj, Almira Bajrami, Gyltene Syla, Mexhida Mjaku Topalli, Shpresa Agushi and Emil Redzepi.



The Geneva Centre for Security Policy is an international foundation serving a global community of individuals and organisations. Our mission is to advance peace, security and international cooperation by providing the knowledge, skills and network for effective and inclusive decision-making. Our portfolio of expertise to address traditional and emerging challenges affecting human and state security includes leadership. Together with the Center for Creative Leadership we have formed the Geneva Leadership Alliance. The Alliance designs & delivers unique leadership development programs equipping today's, and future, leaders to lead more effectively in increasing complex and turbulent challenges. We were delighted to be invited to support two diverse groups of women who are all actively engaged in politics and civil society in Kosovo. Many are already leading their organisations and communities, navigating both the challenges facing all leaders, and the additional challenges created by gendered norms and assumptions that result in women being under-represented in senior positions. Over a week of intensive experiential activities and interactive discussions, we created a space for the women to develop the mindsets, skills and tools to overcome their personal and collective challenges. They inspired us with their vision, capabilities and resilience. With the ongoing support of the E.U. and the U.N., we are confident that they will inspire many others to engage in inclusive and collaborative decision-making that will advance peace, security and sustainable development in the region.

- **The Geneva Centre for Security Policy**



"Having more women in leadership positions might encourage other women and girls to strive for promotion, because it would be a realistic goal. Our society not only needs more female leaders, but it also needs more promoters of equality."

**Dafina Alishani**



"If women ran the world, there would be no wars."

**Flutura Beka - Kamberaj**



"Women's representation in leadership makes the country more powerful and builds trust, so give us the chance as we are those that can turn words into acts!"

**Leonora Morina - Bunjaku**

"Individually we can do small things, but together we can do so much. Let us do that- Women for Women"

**Valdete Bajrami**



"Women are destined to be great leaders because they have an innate ability to dream big"

**Rina Domi**



"I strongly support women in insisting to register property on their names"

**Venera Goxha**



"When you include women in decision making, you're including them in society. That's why women leadership is extremely important."

**Adea Batusha**



"For a better future we, women have to change the present. Through Inspiring Women Leaders, we show the best ways, how to do it"

**Linda Shahini**



"For equality between man and woman – for a brighter future"

**Hatixhe Hoxha**





"Feminism is a legitimate battle for equality. Time has come to end up inequalities based on gender."

**Aida Derguti**

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"More women leaders, better welfare for all. More women leaders, less or no people left behind"

**Valdete Idrizi**

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"I am not just a number. I have a name!"

**Nazlie Bala**

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"Law and policies and hearts and minds go hand in hand."

**Vlora Hoti**

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"Ji vetja, vazhdo para me guxim!"

**Time Kadrijaj**

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"There is no greater strength than women's strength. We can perform miracles. However, for this to happen we have to believe in the power within ourselves."

**Gentiana Begolli**

"A true women leader is the highest expression of individualism."

**Vlera Kastrati**



"Push yourself forward, lift yourself up because nobody will do it for you."

**Marigona Berisha**



"They told me I couldn't, that's why I did. So do not tell people your dreams, show them."

**Danijela Vujicic**



"Being different and persistent as well as having the full support of the life partner will make every woman successful in all it chooses to do."

**Ivana Vukasinovic**



"Take care of yourself. Have time for yourself. Love yourself. Only with selfcare one can care about others."

**Jovana Radosavljevic**



"You have to believe in yourself, so others believe in you."

**Bukurije Gjonbalaj**





"Only if we come together obstacles become opportunities."

**Teuta Hoxha Jahaj**



"Okolina se uglavnom trudi da promeni ciljeve žena i zaustavi ambicije, ali ovi uticaji ne bi trebali nista promeniti u našim životima, osim toga što bi podstakli da slabost, strah i bespomoćnost umre, i rodi se jačina, snaga i hrabrost. Jer samo na taj način možemo pokazati da smo tu negde, da postojimo i da smo ravноправni."

**Almira Bajrami**



"Ka kater gjera te rendesishme ne jete: ndryshim, liri, zgjedhje dhe parime."

**Gyltene Syla**



"Shkelqe me veprimet e tua. Guxo, vepro, mos u ndal sepse liderin e ke brenda vetes!"

**Mexhida Mjaku Topalli**



"Gruaja, lidere e lindur!"

**Shpresa Agushi**



"Jednakost + Solidarnost = Perspektivna buducnost"

**Emilja Redzepi**



# BEYOND THE GENDER TALKS



## What else did we work on in 2019, when it comes to gender equality...

Beyond the EU Gender Talks, other actions of the European Union in Kosovo, in partnership with both Europe Houses in Pristina and North Mitrovica, contributed to the advancement of women's right in Kosovo in 2019. Certain events were the highlights of the year. This section can give you a bit of a flavour on what we focussed on.

# Instagram Challenge #EUGenderTalks #MyRoleModelKosovo

During February 2019, we invited citizens of Kosovo to submit their selfies with the woman/women they consider as role model/s in their life.

Having in mind the power of the social platform Instagram, people quickly reacted to our call:

Who is the most important woman in your life?  
Who is the woman role model for you?  
Who is the woman that inspires you every day?  
Mum, sister, daughter, friend or colleague...  
Take a selfie with this woman in person and be part of the 'EU Insta Challenge - Your woman role model' by using hashtags #EUGenderTalks #MyRoleModelKosovo and posting that photo on Instagram.  
You will get a chance to be part of the photo exhibition that we will open during March at the #EUICC.  
More info here: <https://bit.ly/2E9Vc6G>

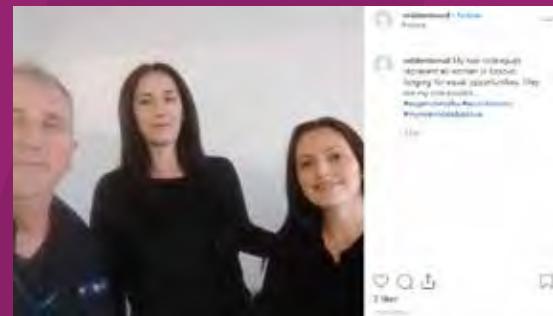
More than 40 photos were shared on Instagram but also on Twitter and Facebook, and made it to the digital exhibition 'EU Insta Challenge - Your woman role model' which opened in March at the Europe House premises in Pristina, EUICC at that time.



## Marking March 8, International Women's Day

The #InstaChallenge led to the marking of the 8th of March. On the eve all of the photos that were submitted to the competition "#InstaChallenge – Your woman role model" were exhibited at the Europe House in Pristina, during an event hosted and introduced by the Head of the EU Office/ EUSR Ambassador Natalija Apostolova. Ambassador Apostolova remarked the importance of women role models and their engagement within the society. "In line with the 8th of March, we need to remember ourselves that societies flourish when women are being given the opportunity to contribute and inspire others. European Union in Kosovo consecutively supports successful women, the education of women in general, equal pay and women sustaining decision-making processes" Apostolova remarked during the event. During the event, Skender Boshtarakaj – an artist and scholar from Kosovo, Ariana Qosaj – activist and chairperson of the Board of the Kosovo Women's Network and Daniel Consentino from the American University in Kosovo, shared their thoughts on the importance of women helping and mentoring other women in Kosovo.





# 2019 Global Open Day

**Global Open Days** activity was launched by the UN in 2010 to review the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Held worldwide, Global Open Day allows women to discuss their efforts to promote peace and security and propose changes to policy and legislation

On the 2019 Global Open Day, at a joint UN-EU event on 12th of March 2019 in Pristina, discussions centred on the need to increase the number of women actively involved in political processes across Kosovo and the region, strengthen implementation of laws on gender equality and consider the voices of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. More than 200 representatives from political and civil society institutions across Kosovo and the region attended the seventh Kosovo edition of the United Nations Global Open Day, under the theme 'Trust-builders and Deal-Makers: Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Kosovo'. Women's full participation in politics and peace is critical to democracy, panelists noted. "Integrating a gender perspective into all politics and women's full, equal political participation are key democratic requirements," stressed Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova, Head of the EU Office in Kosovo and EU Special Representative.

"Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, it is also a necessary foundation for a just and peaceful world," said Ulrika Richardson, UN Development Coordinator for Kosovo, who pointed out studies showing that women's active participation in peace processes increased by 35 per cent the likelihood of a lasting peace agreement. Drawing on global and regional experience, panelists stressed the critical need for women to be fully engaged in all tracks and levels of political processes. "Women must be protagonists. A society cannot advance if women's strategic capital is not used to serve peace, security and democracy," said Edita Tahiri, RWL SEE Chair and former chief negotiator for the Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue. Ms. Sonja Licht, President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, highlighted that issues linked to poverty, such as property rights,

economic participation and gender-based violence, need to be addressed urgently in order for women to build a major constituency.

## **Some of the recommendations that came out of the day's discussions include:**

The creation of mechanisms that ensure that future political processes are representative of women's needs and priorities.

Greater efforts to implement the Law on Gender Equality, with special care taken to protect the rights of women from non-majority communities – whose discrimination also relates to their minority status.

Increasing existing gender quotas for MPs as well as proactively including women in political advisory roles in order to encourage women to pursue political careers; with the clear implementation of sanctions in instances where gender quotas are not met.

Including the needs and concerns of conflict-related sexual violence survivors in the agenda of political processes.

Fast-tracking the existing initiative for the Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia (RECOM).





# All EU staff trained on Gender Equality in one year

In accordance with European Union Gender Action Plan (GAP) II, the EU Office in Kosovo contracted senior external gender expertise from the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) to support the plan Implementation. The project was managed by the Gender Focal Person at the EU Cooperation Section, Selma Sekic, who is an enthusiast of this model of achieving gender mainstreaming in EU programming. 'Contracting such expertise from a local civil society organization was efficient and effective in enhancing staff capacities on gender equality and implement GAP II', she confirms.

From June 2018 to August 2019, all EU staff in Kosovo was trained. In addition, specific training for the management as well as on how to mainstream gender in programs and project of different sectors was also delivered. The main trainer was Nicole Farnsworth, Program Director and Lead Researcher at the KWN, who was assisted by Lina Anders, former EULEX Gender Adviser and present Gender Adviser at the EEAS and later on by Reyes Charle, EUSR Gender Adviser.

Besides the training, the key achievements of the project included the production of internal guidelines and practical guides on gender mainstreaming programs, monitoring, implementing, collection of data, and reporting. It also supported the EU to develop a tailored Gender Action Plan 2019-2020 for the European Union in Kosovo, towards implementing GAP II in Kosovo.

As a result of these efforts, the EU in Kosovo now has plans and systems in place for monitoring and implementing GAP II. The capacities of EUO staff for gender mainstreaming programs has improved. Reporting on GAP II has clearly improved, as reports now contain details from more staff who are working to implement it and to report on their initiatives. Thus, the positive experience of the EUO in Kosovo also has been publicly recognized as a best practice by key responsible officials at the EU in Brussels.



## Women Caucus of Kosovo Parliamentary Assembly

The EUSR works in permanent cooperation with the Women Caucus of the Kosovo Parliamentary Assembly, which brings together all women parliamentarians from all political parties and communities in every legislature. The Caucus was established in 2005 under the auspices of US former Secretary of State Madeline Albright. First informally and then more officially established, the caucus represents a forum for discussion, which has managed to elevate the promotion of gender equality and women representation at the highest level within parliamentary life in Kosovo. Together, women members of the Kosovo Assembly are managing to have their say in improving legislation and promote women rights.

The issue of women representation in politics is still a challenge in Kosovo. Early elections in October brought up a woman candidate for Prime Minister for the first time. However, all political parties opted to apply the minimum standards set out under the Law on General Elections at the time of forming their lists, 30% of candidates, rather than aiming to advance full gender equality representation by adhering to the Law on Gender Equality, which foresees 50%. However, 22 women parliamentarians did not need any quotas to gain a seat in the Assembly on their own merits.

In June 2019, the EUSR participated in a Women's Caucus extraordinary parliamentary session with 60 young women, which aimed at encourage and inspire them to join politics. The event was preceded by an exhibition in the city centre of Pristina featuring portraits of women members of parliament, with inspirational messages, as part of the celebration of the Women's Caucus' 14th anniversary.



# Igballe Rogova and the KOSOVO WOMEN NETWORK

Igballe Rogova, Executive Director of the Kosovo Women Network (KWN) is a pioneer of the women rights activism in Kosovo. An old-school feminist with a permanent smile in her face, she has been fighting for gender equality for decades and is still inspiring the new wave of the young feminist movement in Kosovo. She is an authority in gender issues in general and in Women, Peace and Security and UN SC resolution 1325 in particular. Therefore, the EUSR feels privileged to have count with her presence in many of the EU Gender Talks this year. Her interventions, always pertinent and incisive, have made the discussions always more interesting, more challenging and more productive. Thank you Igo!

KWN is an umbrella organisation, which is unique in Kosovo and in the Western Balkans. It brings together more 158 member organisations and partners and has the mission to support, protect and promote the rights and interests of women and girls, regardless of their political and religious beliefs, age, education, sexual orientation or abilities. KWN has a vision of a Kosovo in which women and men are equal and have equal opportunities for education, employment, political participation, health care and a life without violence.

Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa, Chair of the Board of the KWN, also a great supporter of the EU Gender Talks this year, said in the last KWN Annual Meeting. 'We have always promoted partnerships and solidarity to move things forward'. The EU in Kosovo is always ready to move things forward when it comes to gender equality. That is why from January 2019, the EU is funding a four years KWN project "Strengthening Women's Participation in Politics".

The financing Instrument is IPA Civil Society Facility 2016-2017 in the form of a Grant contract, with a total EU contribution of EUR 540,000.00. The project has an overall objective of strengthen civic engagement, gender equality as well as inclusive, participatory democracy through women's participation in politics and decision-making in Kosovo. Among other actions, the KWN distribute sub-grants to local level women organisations, which otherwise would not have the access to these

kinds of funds. The project is also sponsoring a Coalition of women politicians that brings together present and future municipal representatives from all over Kosovo.

The EU and the KWN will continue working in partnership to promote gender equality in Kosovo.





The background of the slide features a dynamic, abstract design. It consists of several overlapping curved bands in two main colors: a dark navy blue and a bright yellow. These curves are layered and overlap each other, creating a sense of depth and movement across the entire frame.

# THE TEAM

**'Talking Women'** is a summary of EU Gender Talks organized in 2019 by the EU Office in Kosovo/EUSR and the Europe House in Pristina and North Mitrovica. The publication presents a small part of our work, as well as highlights a number of exceptional women in Kosovo who take over responsibilities and raise their voices for Human Rights. Working on gender and women empowerment is one of the priorities of the EU's scope of work in Kosovo, and with this publication we want to put the topic on the political agenda. The EU in Kosovo will undoubtedly continue to underline the importance of gender equality, which we strongly believe in for the benefit of the entire society.

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