



United in Gender Equality

Progress report on Project implementation

9/12/25

Executive summary

During the **18 months (February 2024 – September 2025) of the “United in Gender Equality” (15 months of effective implementation)**, project has delivered **systemic reforms, assessed and increased capacities and developed knowledge products at the level of outstanding achievements.**

Key achievements include:

- **25 laws, strategies, and policy frameworks have been gender mainstreamed**, among which the Election Law (with increased quota to 40%), Strategies on Social and Child Protection, Deinstitutionalization, and Women’s Entrepreneurship, the Agricultural Census Law, National Gender Equality Strategy, Gender Equality Law etc.
- **These are contributing to 11 EU negotiation chapters**, among which Chapter 11 – Agriculture and Rural Development; Chapter 18 – Statistics; Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment; Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security.
- Till date **trained in gender equality and mainstreaming 140 professionals from 20+ institutions**
- The ToT includes **40 selected** candidates from public administration, academia, and civil society, bringing diverse expertise that is now being enriched with advanced knowledge in gender mainstreaming. The program attracted great of applicants among which **66 applicants** fulfilled eligibility criteria and went through selection process.
- **Six flagship knowledge products** have been finalized or are in the final phase:
 - **Gender Equality Profile**
 - **Comparative overview of gender machineries in the Western Balkans**
 - **Assessment of gender mainstreaming opportunities in Government policymaking**
 - **Gender Equality Perception and Attitude Survey in public administration**
 - **Digital Gender Platform**
 - **Video “Woman Born in Montenegro”**
 - **Methodology for Gender Equality Action plans in PA**
 - **Gender Equality Action plans for Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of European Affairs, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Dialogue**

All of this has been achieved despite demanding and changing context (by government reconstructions, delays in the adoption of the Government’s Work Plan, budget, and repeated re-establishment of working groups).

The Project’s continues to work to introduce gender mainstreaming as one of the Government’s priorities therefore goes beyond technical assistance – it requires a thorough understanding of decision-makers and securing their commitment to achieving gender equality goals.

Project implementation

1. Project team

- a) Project Manager (Marija Blagojević) – gender equality expert with 15 years of experience in the country and the region, with core competencies in the area of policy design, gender mainstreaming, strategic planning, education of adults, rule of law and strong institutions and WPS.
- b) Project Assistant (Nikola Mumin) – NEXT GEN gender equality advocate hired through competitive selection process in accordance with UNDP procedures. He possesses 5 years of experience in both project and administrative work.

2. Steering Committee

- 1. **Biljana Pejović**, Head of the Department for Gender Equality, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

Alternate: Irena Varagić, Head of the Department for European Integration, Programming, and Implementation of EU Funds, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

- 2. **Bojan Vujović**, Director-General, Directorate for Coordination of EU Financial Assistance, Ministry of European Affairs

Alternate: Milica Abramović, Head of the Directorate for National IPA Programs, Ministry of European Affairs

- 3. **Milica Pajović**, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Public Administration
- 4. **Anđela Ivanović**, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Dialogue
- 5. **Irena Vučić Popović**, Deputy Secretary-General of the Government
- 6. **Vučić Četković**, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Montenegro
- 7. **Bojana Bošković**, State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance
- 8. **Snežana Remiković**, Assistant Director in the Statistical Office

Liselotte Isaksson, Deputy Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro

- 9. **Mladenka Tešić**, Program Manager for Human Rights and Democratization, Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro

- 10. **Ekaterina Paniklova**, UNDP Resident Representative in Montenegro

- 11. **Kaća Đuričković**, Team Leader, Gender Cluster UNDP Montenegro

3. Implementation of activities

Result 1: Increased knowledge on gender equality and integration of gender dimensions into daily work practices and policy development

1.1. Assessing the practices and identifying gender mainstreaming opportunities in Government policy development

The assessment of practices and opportunities for gender mainstreaming in Government policy development has been finalized. Priorities were established through an analysis of the Government's Annual Work Plan, identifying laws and policies to be gender mainstreamed. The process included extensive interviews with policymakers, analysis of policy documents, and consultations with gender experts. The final assessment is now completed and prepared for publication.

In parallel, the comparative overview of gender machineries in Montenegro and neighboring Western Balkan countries has been completed by two international consultants. This analysis is also finalized and ready for publication.

Both assessments have informed project interventions and strengthened the evidence base for advancing gender mainstreaming. They are finalized deliverables and can be published if a decision is made to share them with an external audience.

Attached

1.2. Development of a Digital Gender Platform

The new Gender Equality Profile provides a broadened and more in-depth analysis of gender equality in Montenegro. Compared to the earlier version, which focused on core sectors such as rule of law, education, employment, health, agriculture, environment, energy, transport, competitiveness, and security, the updated report expands its scope to also cover media and communication, while systematically integrating gender perspectives into public administration reform. It highlights the critical importance of sex-disaggregated data, mapping both availability and existing gaps, and provides sector-specific assessments with updated quantitative indicators.

The report reflects significant contextual developments since the last assessment. It incorporates the results of the 2024 Census and notes progress in the EU accession process. Importantly, the updated Profile moves beyond legal alignment to examine structural, cultural, and institutional barriers, including socioeconomic inequalities, gender-based violence, and persistent stereotypes. In doing so, it delivers a more comprehensive and critical mapping of vulnerabilities, combining up-to-date data with a broader sectoral scope and sharper analysis of underlying challenges.

The data collection on knowledge products has been completed, and the platform has now entered its final stage of implementation. A working version is available and awaiting input from EUD to be finalized. Once finalized, the platform will provide a centralized hub hosting sector-based data, national and international gender equality frameworks, a repository of initiatives, previous Gender Equality Profiles, and multimedia materials.

Woman born in Montenegro is in the final phase and is designed as a powerful public communication tool that presents relevant and up-to-date data to a broad audience in a visually compelling way. The contracted company has finalized the visuals.

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1.3. Gender Equality Perception and Attitude Assessment in public administration of Montenegro

The assessment has been completed, marking the comprehensive survey of gender equality perceptions, knowledge, and practices across the entire Government.

Using scientific methods guided by top notch experts measurements of perceptions, knowledge and attitudes have been translated in powerful knowledge resource to adress substantive issues in the work of public institutions.

Covering all ministries, Parliament, and selected local self-governments, the survey provides both qualitative and quantitative insights, with an in-depth analysis of the institutions.

The report goes beyond surface-level trends to identify knowledge gaps among public servants related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, while also assessing the capacities of institutions in areas such as understanding and applying existing legal provisions, use of gender mainstreaming tools, and awareness of ongoing Government initiatives in this field.

The value of this assessment is multilayered and indispensable for the future work of the Government, as it not only highlights the current state of gender equality in public administration, but also provides a solid evidence base for designing tailored capacity-building measures, improving institutional practices, and guiding future reforms.

The final report is ready for publication, offering an evidence-based resource that will inform targeted technical assistance, strengthen institutional capacities, and support the systematic integration of gender perspectives across public administration.

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Result 2: Gender mainstreaming realised across strategic priorities of the Government

1.1. Gender mainstreaming in policy and strategy development

Out of 25 strategies and laws from the Government's Work Plan that have been gender mainstreamed, our inputs were integrated into 13 – several of which have already been adopted by the Government and/or Parliament – while in 3 cases the proposals were not accepted, and intensive work continues on 10 others.

No.	Law/Strategy	Intervention	Status	Analyses	Impact
1	Judicial Digital Transformation Strategy	Provided inputs to a Working group during development phase related to sex disaggregated data, compliance with international framework, particularly in the area of GBV protection.	Adopted by the Government	Provided in Anex 1	Improved interoperability and access to sex-disaggregated data that enables continuous monitoring of gender-based violence cases, strengthening accountability and protection for women.
2	Strategy on Social and Child protection	Inputs provided in line with Istanbul convention recommendations. 13 out of 16 inputs are accepted and became integral part of the Strategy.	Adopted by the Government	Provided in Anex 1	Improved planning through more accurate statistics and gender analysis, GBV protection as well as higher level of international standards compliance and reduced gender gap in care work.
3	Strategy of Deinstitutionalization	Inputs provided in line with Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) from gender perspective. 10 out of 18 inputs are accepted and became integral part of the Strategy.	Adopted by the Government	Provided in Anex 1	Advanced social inclusion and protection by ensuring accessible, gender-responsive, and community-based support systems, which enable persons with disabilities to live safer, more independent, and dignified lives with reduced risk of institutionalization and greater social justice.
4	Women Entrepreneurship Strategy	Provided inputs during development change that enabled integrating gender equality perspectives more explicitly and addressing systemic barriers. Measures envisaged institutional support mechanism, targeted support for marginalized women, cluster development and capacity building.	Adopted by the Government	Provided in Anex 1	Addressed structural gender barriers, expanded women's participation in STEM, green and digital economies, thereby strengthening women's economic empowerment, resilience, and competitiveness in line with EU and international gender equality standards.
5	Agricultural Census Law	The amendments to Articles 9 and 11 aimed to legally introduce the obligation to collect certain sex-	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved the Agricultural census by introducing sex-disaggregated data, which enhances gender analysis,

		disaggregated data, which would directly advance gender analysis in the agricultural sector.			supports the economic empowerment of rural women, and enables more effective and inclusive policies for sustainable rural development.
6	Law on Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms (Ombudsman)	Provided inputs to the Working group in the development phase. 6 out of 8 inputs accepted and became integral part of the Draft Law. In line with CEDAW recommendations, the accepted inputs strengthen the institutional framework for gender equality by requiring the Ombudsman to ensure gender balance in staffing and to consider the appointment of a Deputy dedicated to gender equality. Furthermore, it was proposed that a binding legal norm be introduced to regulate candidate testing, making it obligatory that all candidates demonstrate competencies, knowledge, and abilities across relevant areas — including gender equality.	Public consultations concluded on 20 March. Adoption by the Government pending.	Provided in Anex 1	Enhanced the institution's capacity to promote gender equality and combat discrimination by improving internal expertise, ensuring gender balance, and strengthening its mandate, which increases public trust and makes protection against gender-based harm more effective.
7	Law on Equality Protection and Prohibition of Discrimination	Delivered inputs to the Working group, that included explicit recognizing of gender equality as a fundamental principle of the law mandatory use of gender-sensitive language in all official communications and procedures; gender impact assessments for all	Adopted by the Government, sent to the Parliament.	Provided in Anex 1	Improved the legal framework by explicitly recognizing gender equality as a fundamental principle, mandating gender-sensitive language, and introducing gender impact assessments, which strengthen institutional accountability, advance women's rights, and transform the law

		policies, programs, and laws adopted by public authorities; preventive and educational measures against gender-based violence, introduction of specific support for victims of gender discrimination; enhancing institutional monitoring and response to gender-based discrimination. The proposed inputs were not integrated into this law and are redirected to the Law on Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Gender Equality Law, it was expected that these provisions would be incorporated there.			into an active tool for promoting structural equality.
8	National Gender Equality Strategy	The strategy envisages key measures that include the development of a gender-responsive budgeting system, mandatory collection of gender-disaggregated data, strengthening mechanisms for preventing and responding to violence against women, improving women's political participation and institutionalizing gender-responsive plans in all sectors. Support provided throughout all phases of development and	Adopted by the Government	Provided in Anex 1	Enhanced institutional capacities by introducing gender-responsive budgeting, mandatory sex-disaggregated data collection, and sector-wide gender-responsive plans, which improve evidence-based decision-making, strengthen protection against violence, and advance women's political participation to combat systemic inequalities.

		adoption of the Strategy. Organized expert discussion as a part of public discussion.			
9	Law on Gender Equality	Development of the Law is informed by the WB gender mechanisms comparative analyses which findings showed the best model for MNE is establishment of the independent Agency for GE. The new Law will also define concrete policy measures to promote and advance gender equality, mandate the use of gender impact assessments in policymaking, specify planning acts related to gender mainstreaming, and clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of state bodies, employers, and social partners. Support provided throughout all phases of development.	Development of the Law ongoing	Provided in Anex 1	Improved Montenegro's institutional framework by creating a centralized body for coordination and oversight, mandating gender impact assessments, and introducing sanctions for non-compliance, which strengthens accountability, ensures gender-sensitive policymaking, and advances the enforcement of equality obligations.
10	The Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament	The proposed amendments to increase the quota for the underrepresented gender on electoral lists to 40%, as well as the amendment to the order of candidates of the underrepresented gender on electoral lists (for every three candidates there must be one candidate of the underrepresented gender), have been adopted and	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved women's political participation by ensuring more equitable representation in decision-making, which strengthens democracy, enhances the inclusiveness of public policy, and fosters a political culture based on equal opportunities.

		are now part of the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Election of Councillors and MPs, Article 39a, paragraph 1 and paragraph 2. Support provided to the Committee for Gender Equality in analysis and formulation of the articles.			
11	Law on Government	The proposed amendments to the Law on the Government of Montenegro are aimed at ensuring gender equality in the highest executive body of government. The initiative includes the obligation that at least 40% of the members of the Government and the vice-president are from the less represented gender. Provided inputs to the Working group. They are not the integral part of the Draft yet. Draft is sent to EU Commission.	Adoption by the Government pending	Provided in Anex 1	Improved gender balance in the executive branch by introducing a 40% quota, mandatory gender analysis, and transparency measures, which make the Government more inclusive, strengthen accountability, and reinforce the institutional commitment to equality
12	Law on the Parliament	Incorporate gender-sensitive language throughout the law; gender-balanced representation in positions such as the President and Vice-President of the Parliament, members of the Collegium, working bodies and committees, and international delegations.	Working body has not officially begun development of the draft.	Provided in Anex 1	Enhanced inclusiveness in the legislative branch by introducing gender-sensitive language, quotas for balanced representation, and education on gender equality, which strengthen democratic processes, improve decision-making, and build citizens' trust in institutions

		Inputs developed and will be delivered to the working body once it begins its work.			
13	Law on Local Self Governments	Inputs provided to the Ministry of Public Administration during the public discussion. Introduced new article 51 covering 13 of our inputs accepted by the Working group.	Adoption by the Government pending	Provided in Anex 1	Enhanced functionality and legitimacy of local government by promoting inclusive policymaking and more equitable distribution of resources with improved evidence-based and gender-sensitive public services, the accountability of local authorities, and strengthened participation of women at all levels of governance.
14	Law on Civil servants and Deputies	Introduce a provision in the general principles stating that public administration must act in accordance with the principles of gender equality; Articles related to recruitment and appointment (e.g. Articles 24 and 28) would be amended to require balanced gender representation, especially in leadership roles, and to allow preference for equally qualified candidates from the underrepresented gender; mandatory monitoring and reporting on gender balance in public service and the implementation of measures to promote equal representation; Articles 61 and 66 would be amended to guarantee job protection during pregnancy,	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved fairness and inclusiveness in public administration by introducing gender balance in leadership, stronger protection of parental rights, and safeguards against discrimination, which strengthen legal security, promote equal opportunities, and foster a culture of gender equality in state institutions

		parental, and maternity leave, along with the right to return to the same or equivalent position; state institutions would be required to organize regular gender equality training and strengthen protection from discrimination by updating provisions on disciplinary proceedings (e.g. Articles 100 and 101), including safeguards for whistleblowers who report gender-based discrimination or harassment. Partially adopted inputs related to maternity and parental leave. The new provisions foresee the possibility of appointing acting heads during periods of maternity, parental, or childcare leave, while at the same time stipulating that any transfer to another position may only be carried out with the written consent of employees on such leave.			
15	Company Law	The proposed amendments to the Company Law aim to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of business, including management, employment, reporting, access to resources and education. Interventions include the obligation of a minimum	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved economic equality by introducing a 40% quota for women in management, gender-sensitive employment and reporting measures, and incentives for women entrepreneurs, which increase women's participation in the economy,

		representation of women in management structures (40%), regular reporting on the gender structure of employees, the promotion of gender equality in employment, incentives for women entrepreneurs (e.g. tax incentives) and special measures for women in rural areas. Provision regarding 40% quota for women on boards accepted.			reduce structural barriers, and support sustainable and inclusive growth.
16	Law on Credit-Guarantee Fund	The amendments introduce the mandatory use of gender-sensitive language (Article 4), ensure non-discriminatory application procedures and targeted support for women entrepreneurs through trainings, outreach, and eased conditions (Articles 5–9), and require tailored procedures in enforcement processes (Article 10). Structural changes include a requirement that at least 40% of the Fund's Board members come from the less represented gender, along with the mandatory appointment of a gender equality expert (Article 20). Internal policies promoting gender equality in employment (Article 29), gender-sensitive risk management (Article 30), and mandatory collection and reporting	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved access to finance for women entrepreneurs, which eliminates structural barriers, supports women-led businesses, and contributes to long-term economic equality and inclusive development by introducing tailored financial measures (reduced fees, extended repayment, tailored criteria) and gender-sensitive monitoring

		of gender-disaggregated data (Articles 31–33) are also introduced. The amendments establish oversight mechanisms for monitoring gender equality implementation (Article 34) and ensure gender balance during board member selection (Article 35). Additional proposals include the creation of a dedicated support program for women entrepreneurs and the implementation of mandatory gender equality training and awareness campaigns for Fund staff and beneficiaries. Inputs were not accepted.			
17	Law on Business Entities Registration	Key changes relate to the obligation to use gender-sensitive language in the text of the law and accompanying documents (Art. 2), specifying definitions to exclude gender bias (Art. 3), and introducing the obligation to submit data on the gender structure of founders, owners, employees and members of management bodies (Art. 10, 16, 22). Also, mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on gender balance are proposed, as well as sanctioning entities that fail to meet these obligations (Art. 44), with additional measures aimed at	Adopted by the Parliament	Provided in Anex 1	Improved transparency and accountability in the business sector, which promotes equal representation, fosters socially responsible entrepreneurship, and supports the development of a more gender-balanced labor market by introducing gender-sensitive language, mandatory reporting on gender structure, and sanctions for non-compliance

		public institutions and obligations for gender equality education (Art. 12 and 45). Inputs are not integral part of the adopted Law.			
18	Criminal code	The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Montenegro aim to introduce femicide as a distinct criminal offense, in line with the obligations stemming from the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The proposal includes amending Article 142 by introducing a definition of gender-based violence: <i>"Gender-based violence against women is violence directed at a woman because she is a woman or that disproportionately affects women."</i> Additionally, Article 144, paragraph 1 would be expanded with three new grounds under which a murder would qualify as femicide: – when the victim is a woman, a family or household member, previously subjected to physical, psychological, or sexual violence by the perpetrator, and killed because of her sex; – when the murder is committed with torture motivated by hatred	Draft Law development by WG ongoing	Provided in Anex 1	Strengthened Montenegro's legal framework, which enables stricter sentencing, improves prevention of violence against women, restores trust in the justice system, and supports evidence-based policymaking

		based on the victim's sex; – when the murder is motivated by hatred due to gender identity or other circumstances that indicate gender-based violence. Provided inputs to the Working group. Organized expert discussion.			
19	Misdemeanour Law	The proposed amendments to the Law on Misdemeanors aim to introduce a gender-sensitive approach to the misdemeanor system in Montenegro, ensuring that the law more effectively recognizes, addresses, and prevents gender-based discrimination and violence. Although Article 10a already references gender-sensitive language, the amendment strengthens it by stating that all provisions of the law must be interpreted and applied in line with the principle of gender equality. A new article is proposed to define and sanction gender-based discrimination as a misdemeanor, including harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. Another proposed article introduces the obligation to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated	Draft Law development by WG ongoing	Provided in Anex 1	Strengthened the justice system, which improves protection of victims, prevents trivialization of gender-based offenses, and promotes structural change in line with international standards by introducing gender-sensitive provisions, defining and sanctioning gender-based discrimination, and mandating sex-disaggregated data collection

		data in misdemeanor records—covering perpetrators, victims, and sanctions—so that the system can be evaluated through a gender lens. This is reinforced by an amendment to Article 53, which expands the content of misdemeanor records to include data on the gender of perpetrators and victims. To prevent the trivialization of gender-based misdemeanors, an amendment to Article 33 ensures that alternative sanctions such as warnings or suspended sentences are not applied in cases involving gender discrimination. A new article introduces special protection measures for victims of such misdemeanors, including confidentiality, special conditions for testimony, and other protective actions.			
20	Law on Protection against Domestic violence	These amendments go beyond technical harmonization with the EU acquis, as they directly respond to the recommendations of the European Commission, GREVIO, and the CEDAW Committee. They are designed to reinforce the institutional response, standardize procedures, and raise the level of protection to the highest European standards.	WG has not been established yet	Provided in Anex 1	Strengthened institutional response, which ensures timely and equal protection for victims, improves coordination, and aligns Montenegro with the highest European standards by introducing clearer definitions of violence, mandatory risk assessments, urgent protection measures, and specialized training for professionals

21	Law on NGOs	A new Article 22a establishes that neither gender may be represented with less than 40% in the governing bodies of NGOs. Article 19a calls for the creation of dedicated funds and programs to support NGOs working on gender equality and women's rights. Additional amendments (Articles 19b–19g) introduce mandatory gender sensitivity training, systems for monitoring and reporting on gender-related activities, centralized financing for NGOs providing services to victims of gender-based violence, the verification and accreditation of such organizations, and the inclusion of gender experts and civil society representatives in the evaluation and funding decision-making processes. Provided inputs to the Working group.	Draft Law development by WG ongoing	Provided in Anex 1	These amendments have the potential to significantly enhance the role of NGOs in advancing gender equality, professionalize the sector, and ensure more effective support for women and survivors of violence.
22	Law on Social and Child protection	Inputs: Removal of discriminatory provisions and introduction of clear bans preventing perpetrators of gender-based violence from using or managing rights within the system; mandatory training and testing of professionals on gender equality	Draft Law development by WG is ongoing.	Provided in Anex 1	Improved equal access to rights and services, which strengthens protection for vulnerable groups, ensures fairer participation in decision-making, and promotes a more inclusive and accountable social protection system by embedding a gender perspective in definitions, objectives, and measures,

		and prevention of gender-based violence; introduction of quotas for gender-balanced participation in governance structures; development of a gender-sensitive methodology for disability assessment; extension of rights and benefits (housing, allowances for caregivers) in a way that recognizes gender roles in care and support; strengthening coordination of social protection with health, education, employment, justice, and police sectors, while taking into account the specific needs of women and men. Provided inputs to the Working group. Organized expert discussion.			and by introducing quotas, safeguards for survivors of violence, and gender-sensitive professional standards
23	Labour Law	The proposed amendments will transpose two key directives: Directive (EU) 2023/970 on strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms, and Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union. New	Adoption by the Government pending	Provided in Anex 1	Reduced the gender pay gap, which ensures fairer working conditions, protects vulnerable workers, and promotes economic equality between women and men by introducing stronger guarantees for equal pay, prohibiting wage discrimination, and increasing pay transparency protection from workplace violence.

		changes will focus on protection from violence at work place.			
24	Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Montenegro 2025–2029	Proposals: to recognize women, especially those from marginalized communities, as key drivers of change in social entrepreneurship; to acknowledge the multiple discrimination women face and foresees tools that directly respond to their needs, positioning social entrepreneurship as an instrument of gender justice.	Draft document developed by WG	Provided in Anex 1	Improved equal access to resources and opportunities, which strengthens women's leadership, promotes inclusive employment, and positions social entrepreneurship as a tool for gender justice and sustainable development by integrating a gender perspective and introducing measures to empower women, especially those from marginalized communities.
25	Foreign Policy Strategy	MFA is provided with analysis of foreign feminist policy with case studies.	Development by WG is ongoing	Provided in Anex 1	Strengthening international reputation as a progressive, values-driven small state, maximizing its influence through a focus on human security, equality, and peacebuilding, and advances EU accession goals under Chapters 23 and 31 in line with key EU gender equality frameworks.
26	Law on Social Entrepreneurship	WG started the process of law development	Development by WG is ongoing		

The series of expert discussions has become an effective tool and a focused space for targeted exchanges, helping to shape clearer and more implementable provisions in Montenegro's legislative and policy frameworks. Each discussion was deliberately designed to bring together top experts and practitioners from relevant sectors— policymakers, members of working groups, service providers, academics, and civil society—so that provisions are tested against practice and adjusted to real institutional needs. This targeted approach not only improves the technical quality of laws and strategies but also builds ownership among those who will implement them, ensuring that reforms are sustainable and effective.

The impact of these dialogues is already visible. The *Expert Discussion on Femicides* (25 February 2025) directly informed the introduction of femicide as a distinct criminal offense, aligning Montenegro with the Istanbul Convention and EU standards. The *Expert Discussion on the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2025–2029* (18 June 2025) shaped the final provisions of the country's most important policy framework on equality, embedding stronger institutional mechanisms and accountability measures. The *Expert Discussion on Institutional Responses to Gender-Based Violence* (17 July 2025) ensured that the licensing and regulation of specialized services for survivors are based on tested standards of quality, accessibility, and sustainability.

2.2. Creating a pool of in-house experts for gender mainstreaming within the Government

12 tailor-made trainings have been delivered to a wide range of Montenegrin public institutions, directly strengthening practical gender-mainstreaming skills in 20+ key institutions including: Prime Minister's Office, Secretariat General of the Government of Montenegro, State Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Public Administration, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Energy and Mining, Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Parliament of Montenegro, Human Resources Management Authority, Customs Administration, Directorate for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions, Centre for Vocational Education, Institute for Social and Child Protection, Investment Agency.

In total, till date 140 professionals have been equipped with tools and knowledge to integrate gender perspectives in their day-to-day work.

The ToT programme has been designed and implemented to the highest professional standards, fully aligned with the rules and procedures of the Human Resources Management Authority (HRMA).

The ToT includes 40 selected candidates from public administration, academia, and civil society, bringing diverse expertise that is now being enriched with advanced knowledge in gender mainstreaming. The program attracted great of applicants among which 66 applicants fulfilled eligibility criteria and went through selection process.

Cohort 1 (20 participants) has successfully completed five comprehensive modules, with all participants passing the written knowledge assessment. Their practical evaluations will take place in September and October. Successful candidates will continue delivering gender trainings in accordance with HRMA work plan.

Cohort 2 (20 participants) began on 11 September, continuing to expand the pool of future gender trainers.

What makes the programme particularly strong is the diversity of participants: civil servants from different ministries and agencies, academics, and civil society representatives. They bring with them a wide spectrum of professional expertise—from law and economics, to education, social protection, and policy analysis—which is now being enriched and expanded with advanced knowledge in gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

This variety ensures that the programme does not only build individual skills but also creates a network of experts capable of translating gender mainstreaming into practice across different sectors and institutions. Curriculum includes fundamentals of gender mainstreaming, advanced concepts and applied mainstreaming in policy & practice, institutional gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, addressing sexism and misogyny as well as integrated trainer skills and facilitation methods

By combining broad institutional trainings with a rigorous, multi-sectoral ToT programme, Montenegro is building a sustainable and diverse cadre of gender trainers. Their varied expertise, enhanced with in-depth knowledge of gender equality, ensures that gender mainstreaming will not only be institutionalized but also creatively adapted and applied across government, academia, and civil society. This approach significantly strengthens the country's gender equality architecture and guarantees lasting impact.

Additional trainings are agreed with Ministry of European Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Social Protection, Care for Family and Demography and the Ministry of Public Administration.

Also, training for officials of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demographics is scheduled, as well as the continuation of training for MFA, MPA, and MEA.

2.3. Development of tools and methods for gender mainstreaming in policymaking

This activity is in the development phase and tools for:

- Gender Equality Analysis
 - Tool for Gender Mainstreaming in Policy Development and Programming
 - Tool for Gender Mainstreaming in Institutional Rules and Procedures
- will be completed and in use at the same time as accredited training program.

Result 3: Strengthened normative framework for gender machinery and gender mainstreaming

3.1. Initiate amending of the Law on Gender Equality based on the comparative analyses' development plan for the advancement of gender machinery in the country

3.2. Development of accompanying bylaws, normative and procedural framework for Gender Equality Law

The new National Gender Equality Strategy has been adopted, marking a milestone in advancing the gender equality agenda in Montenegro. Developed with strong technical support from the project and informed by the Gender Equality Profile, the Strategy sets the future direction of gender equality policy in the country. It strengthens the normative and strategic framework in line with CEDAW recommendations, EU Directives, and introduces a clear pathway for building institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming in public administration.

A Working Group for the development of a new Gender Equality Law is actively engaged, supported by two consultants — one international and one national — with technical backing from the project. The process is guided by the comparative assessment of gender mechanisms in the Western Balkans, prepared under the project.

The draft Law is expected to bring major transformative changes to Montenegro's gender equality infrastructure, including:

- Establishment of a formal institutional mechanism at the agency level, equipped with more sustainable financial and human resources.
- Replacement of the current Gender Focal Point system with a new cadre of Gender Experts, anchored within a strengthened institutional framework (formerly the Department for Gender Equality), ensuring professional, accountable, and effective gender mainstreaming across the public administration.
- Mandatory gender mainstreaming in public administration, supported by specialized expertise and fully aligned with the new strategic and legal framework.

The draft Law is expected to be finalized by the end of the year, with its adoption planned for the first quarter of next year, in accordance with the Government's Annual Work Plan.

ROM recommendations

1. **Adjust indicators at the output level and institutionalise more robust planning and reporting mechanisms**

EUD OM revised log frame and with full UNDP support will be presented to Steering committee.

2. The IP may consider to intensify communication with OM along with clearer documentation and validation of completed outputs.

UNDP stands ready to all suggestions of EUD as suggested regular coordination meeting are not sufficiently frequent.

3. The IP may consider to intensify efforts in finalisation and publication of knowledge products and finalisation of the methodologies connected to the sustainability of integrating gender mainstreaming into public administration and normative acts.

Seven knowledge products are completed and six are in progress awaiting endorsement from partners.

4. The IP may consider to review the planned activities under output 3, define priority intervention areas and update the workplan with detailed information on delivery of its support. The detailed workplan should also address delays in the implementation pace and the short project implementation time left. SC and EUD should be included in this process.

Unclear which delays this recommendation refers to. All activities in the Project work plan are to be finalised in the expected project span.

5. To improve long-term sustainability, the IP may engage with key institutional partners (especially HRMA and the Department for Gender Equality) to develop a transition or handover plan for maintaining and updating tools, methodologies, and the platform beyond the project's lifetime.

Long-term sustainability is ensured as well as full commitment of partners.

Budget

Project overall budget: 549,250.00 USD

Total amount spent: 409,166.23USD

Current commitments: 133,662.91USD

OUTCOME	RESULTS	TOTAL Budget (USD)	Total spent	Commitments	Spent and committed
OUTCOME 1	Result 1: Increased knowledge on gender equality and integration of gender dimensions into daily work practices and policy development	\$86,000.00	\$79,248.92	\$ 5,200.00	\$84,448.92
	Result 2: Gender mainstreaming realised across strategic priorities of the Government	\$255,817.76	\$155,108.73	\$84,583.00	\$239,691.73
	Result 3: Strengthened normative framework for gender machinery and gender mainstreaming	\$32,000.00	\$19,406.04	\$6,581.45	\$25,987.49
	1.4 Project management	\$139,500.00	\$127,843.00	\$28,926.00	\$156,769.00
A. Total Direct Eligible Cost of the Action		\$513,317.76	\$381,606.69	\$125,290.45	\$506,897.14
B. Total Indirect Eligible Cost (GMS) [ii]		\$35,932.24	\$27,559.54	\$8,372.46	\$35,932.00
TOTAL Eligible Costs (A+B)		\$549,250.00	\$409,166.23	\$133,662.91	\$542,829.14

Anex I

Title: Judicial Digital Transformation Strategy 2024-2027

Status: Adopted by the Government

Throughout all phases of the planning process for the Judicial Digital Transformation Strategy, contributions were made to ensure gender mainstreaming. In addition to using gender-sensitive language, these contributions focused on enhancing the alignment of the strategy with key domestic and international strategic documents, declarations, and other relevant obligations from gender equality area.

During the situation analysis phase, particular attention was given to identifying deficiencies within the current digitalization system, including inadequate interoperability of gender-disaggregated data among institutions, insufficient gender analysis in the development of strategic and legal frameworks, and challenges in the advancement of electronic services. The recommendations emphasized improving the interoperability of digital services across all judicial institutions to facilitate access to gender-disaggregated data and enable ongoing monitoring of cases involving gender-based violence and violence against women. Furthermore, these inputs contributed to the formulation of the strategy's general objectives, specifically promoting the integration of a gender perspective within the judiciary through digital systems as an essential component of achieving the strategy's overarching goals.

A harmonized gender-responsive normative framework is also one of the prerequisites for the successful digitalization of the judiciary, through defining a mechanism for launching initiatives for analysis, including gender analysis and changes to the normative framework. The goal is to achieve a high level of consistency, efficiency and harmonisation within the system, thus laying the foundations for a successful and sustainable digitalized judiciary.

In the part of specific activities, the inputs related to strengthening cooperation between judicial authorities and data exchange, especially in gender-based violence. In addition, activities related to meeting ISO standards will also include ISO 53800 standards - gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, in part of the activities, significant input was provided for expanding the scope of employee education to include gender equality standards.

In the part of the indicators set at all levels of the strategy, the inputs pointed to the importance of incorporating a gender perspective, but also specifically contributed to strengthening the quality of individual indicators - mandatory content of individual reports; gender-segregated data included in the value of indicators; constant monitoring of the number of cases of violence against women and gender-based violence.

The integration of a gender perspective in the digital transformation of the judiciary is vital for building a system that is equitable, transparent, and responsive to all citizens. Through the

identification of key structural gaps—such as limited interoperability of gender-disaggregated data and the absence of comprehensive gender analysis in policy-making—the contributions helped shape a strategy that promotes inclusive justice. The focus on improving data exchange, particularly in cases of gender-based violence, and embedding gender-sensitive indicators ensures that digital tools are not only efficient but also accountable. This enables ongoing monitoring and targeted policy interventions, supporting the judiciary’s role in addressing systemic inequalities.

By aligning the strategy with EU standards and gender equality benchmarks, these contributions also support Montenegro’s EU integration process, particularly in meeting the criteria under Chapters 23 and 24, as well as Chapter 10 and 18.

The inclusion of ISO 53800 standards on gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as the expansion of training for judicial personnel, demonstrates a commitment to institutional transformation in line with European values. A digital judiciary that incorporates gender-responsive mechanisms signals Montenegro’s readiness to advance toward a modern, rights-based judicial framework that upholds the rule of law and fundamental rights for all.

Title: Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System 2025–2028, with Action Plan for 2025

Status: Adopted by the Government

The Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System for the period 2025–2028 represents a key reform document in the area of social policy, aimed at improving the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of services, strengthening the preventive function of the system, and reducing poverty and social exclusion. The document is based on international standards (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CEDAW, EU standards, European Pillar of Social Rights), a comprehensive analysis of the current situation, and strategic obligations stemming from the EU accession process.

The Strategy covers a set of interconnected areas: improvement of the normative and institutional framework, increasing the adequacy of material benefits, development and diversification of social services, strengthening human resources, improvement of the information system and gender-disaggregated statistics, and strengthening cross-sectoral coordination. The Action Plan specifies concrete measures, indicators, and responsible actors, including the licensing of service providers, development of a minimum package of social services, strengthening the work of social welfare centers, improvement of protection for children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, as well as the establishment of specialized services for victims of gender-based violence in line with the Istanbul Convention.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the Strategy for the Development of the Social and Child Protection System provides a systemic guarantee that all measures, programs, and policies are based on the analysis of the specific needs of women and men, girls and boys, ensuring equal access to rights, resources, and services, reducing gender inequalities, and fulfilling obligations arising from the EU negotiation process, CEDAW, and the Istanbul Convention.

The Strategy is aligned with Montenegro's EU Accession Program (PPCG) and directly contributes to fulfilling obligations under Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), particularly in the areas of social inclusion, deinstitutionalization, protection from discrimination, and equal opportunities. The document supports the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, especially in the areas of social protection, service accessibility, and inclusion.

Implementation of the Strategy has the potential to improve the quality of life of beneficiaries, reduce poverty and social exclusion, increase the availability of services at both the national and local levels, and ensure sustainable and measurable progress for Montenegro in the area of social policy, with greater accountability and coordination among all system actors.

The vision and strategic goal of the Strategy for Social and Child Protection are aimed at establishing an integrated, effective, and sustainable system based on human rights and harmonized with European and international standards, which, through clearly defined

operational objectives and measurable indicators, ensures improvement in the quality of life of citizens and contributes to the sustainable economic development of Montenegro.

13 out of 16 comments (81.3%) were accepted, while one more was accepted but included in a different part of the Strategy. This significantly improved the Strategy in terms of gender equality, data quality, service development, and protection of vulnerable groups.

Through Comments 1 and 3, language and terminology were clarified (overcoming adverse circumstances instead of “exiting the system”, disability assessment), which made the Strategy clearer and more professional, while also ensuring a more gender-sensitive approach to users facing adverse life situations.

Through Comments 4, 6, and 16, a strong gender dimension was introduced: analysis of the needs of women and men with disabilities, improvement of gender statistics, and the obligation to use gender-sensitive language. This ensures that policies are not based on “neutral” data, but that they recognize the different positions of women and men and their access to services.

Comment 5 brought a technical correction (Law on Protection from Domestic Violence), but also strengthened alignment with international standards on combating violence against women and girls – highlighting the gender-based nature of the problem.

Comment 7 emphasized regional and rural disparities in poverty risk. These particularly affect women, who in rural areas face lower employment, limited access to resources, and often carry the burden of unpaid care work.

Comment 8 further elaborated the challenges in day centers and family support for children with developmental difficulties. This directly reduces the care burden that predominantly falls on women (mothers), strengthens equality, and allows for a better balance between family and work responsibilities.

Comments 9 and 13 contributed to the development of foster care – especially specialized foster care – and introduced gender analysis of foster carers. This is important since women traditionally bear the greatest burden in foster care, and the Strategy now foresees support adapted to their needs.

Comment 10 addressed children using psychoactive substances and children with addictive behaviors, with attention to differences between boys and girls in risk behaviors and the need for differentiated measures.

Comment 11 focused attention on challenges faced by older people in rural areas, especially women who are left without income, social services, or institutional support, increasing their multiple vulnerabilities.

Comment 14 stressed the need for local plans to be based on an analysis of women’s and men’s needs, introducing the obligation of gender-differentiated planning and more responsible use of resources at the local level.

These provide:

- Stronger gender inclusiveness and compliance with international standards.
- More accurate statistics and gender analysis of data for improved planning.
- Development and improvement of community services (foster care, day centers, family support) that reduce the gender gap in care work.
- Focus on vulnerable groups: women in rural areas, women and girls survivors of violence.

By aligning the strategy with EU standards and gender equality benchmarks, these contributions also support Montenegro's EU integration process, particularly in meeting the criteria under Chapters 18, 19, 23 and 24.

Title: Strategy for Deinstitutionalization in Montenegro 2025–2028, with Action Plan for 2025
Status: Adopted by the Government

The Strategy for Deinstitutionalization is a key reform document in social and child protection, focused on preventing institutionalization, expanding community-based services, and transitioning users to less restrictive forms of care. It is based on international standards (CRC, CRPD, EU standards, European Pillar of Social Rights), an analysis of the current situation, and Montenegro's EU accession obligations.

It addresses strengthening the legal and institutional framework, intersectoral cooperation, local services for vulnerable groups (children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, Roma and Egyptians, homeless, others), transformation of institutions, and human resource development. The Action Plan defines measures, indicators, and responsible actors, including licensing, quality standards, preventive programs, foster care, crisis services, and improved functioning of social welfare centers.

Special focus is placed on integrated services, family support, supported housing, mentoring, and counseling-therapeutic programs, with gender mainstreaming ensuring equal access for women and men, girls and boys, guaranteeing equal access to rights, resources, and services, while reducing structural gender inequalities in social and child protection.

The Strategy provides inputs for amendments to the Law on Social and Child Protection and builds on the Strategy for the Development of Social and Child Protection, creating a coherent system. Its implementation supports Montenegro's EU integration, contributing to Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). Within Montenegro's EU Accession Program (PPCG), deinstitutionalization has been recognized as a key segment in negotiations. The adoption of the Strategy and related action plans further strengthens state capacities to meet EU *acquis* obligations. The Strategy is fully aligned with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, particularly in the areas of social protection and inclusion, equal opportunities, and access to the labor market.

Implementation is expected to improve quality of life, expand access to local services, secure a sustainable shift from institutional to community-based care, and ensure measurable progress in social policy with greater accountability across the system.

A total of 10 out of 17 comments (58.8%) were accepted, significantly improving the Strategy in terms of the quality of community-based services, accessibility, and protection of vulnerable groups.

Comments 4, 6 and 7 strengthened service providers' competencies (SOS helpline), developed "supported housing," and introduced standardization of sign language. This directly increased accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities, especially women and girls who are at multiple risks of discrimination and violence.

Through comments 8 and 11, the Strategy recognizes the need for better information on family placement and support for families when users leave institutions, which reduces the risk of re-institutionalization and relieves women, who traditionally bear the greatest burden of informal care.

By correcting the data in comment 9, the analytical basis (reasons for placement) was improved, enabling more accurate planning of measures while considering the different needs of men and women in older age.

Comments 13 and 14 introduced a clear gender and safety perspective: recognizing hidden risks of violence against women and men with disabilities, and highlighting specific barriers faced by older women in rural areas, who often remain without income and without access to services.

Through comment 15, the Strategy introduces measures for users with chemical and non-chemical addictions, emphasizing the need for a gender-sensitive approach to women with addictions, who face additional stigma.

Comment 17 addresses “post-discharge” support after psychiatric treatment, reducing long-term stays in institutions due to lack of family support and ensuring greater reintegration into the community.

These provide:

- Greater accessibility and inclusion (sign language, supported housing, trained staff).
- Better information and family support → easier transitions from institutions, lower risk of return.
- More accurate planning due to corrected statistical data.
- Stronger protection from violence and introduction of a gender dimension in work with persons with disabilities and the elderly in rural areas.
- Introduced measures for addictions and post-discharge support → more sustainable community life, greater social justice.

Title: Women's entrepreneurship Strategy

Status: Adopted by the Government

The proposed changes strengthen the strategic framework by integrating gender equality more explicitly and addressing systemic barriers faced by women entrepreneurs. Textual revisions emphasize the unequal distribution of unpaid care work, highlight the underrepresentation of women in STEM and high-growth sectors (only 14% of STEM jobs in the Western Balkans), and broaden the innovation focus to include STEM and digital initiatives.

Three new measures are introduced:

Institutional Support Mechanism – Establishment of a permanent inter-ministerial body for legislative support to women's entrepreneurship and the integration of gender perspectives across economic, innovation, digitalization, and employment policies. This body would also oversee gender-responsive budgeting and align the national framework with international conventions on equal rights in self-employment.

Targeted Support for Marginalized Women – Design and implementation of dedicated programmes for women from rural and marginalized groups (including Roma women, women with disabilities, older women, and minority women). These address multiple barriers such as geographical isolation, weak infrastructure, lack of training and mentoring opportunities, reduced property ownership, and limited access to credit. Programmes will focus on agribusiness, rural tourism, crafts, and sustainable food production in cooperation with municipalities and local communities.

Cluster Development and Capacity Building – Expansion of programme support for women's entrepreneurship clusters, including tailored trainings on cluster management, leadership, cooperation, digital marketing, exports, and innovation. A mentoring programme for women in STEM fields will be created to increase their participation and visibility in innovation-driven sectors.

By embedding these measures, the Strategy shifts from general support to targeted, systemic interventions that address structural inequalities, foster participation in STEM and high-growth sectors, and provide tailored programmes for vulnerable groups. This approach strengthens women's economic empowerment, enhances inclusive growth, and ensures resilience and competitiveness of women-led businesses.

The changes are closely aligned with Montenegro's EU accession obligations under Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment), Chapter 20 (Enterprise and Industrial Policy), and Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). They respond to the priorities of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action (GAP III), and recommendations of CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Title: The Law on the Census of Agriculture

Status: Adopted by the Parliament

The existing Draft Law on the Census of Agriculture didn't provide solution for the collection and processing of data classified by sex, which ignores the gender dimension in one of the key sectors for the economic and social development of Montenegro. The absence of gender-disaggregated data made it difficult to see the specific needs, roles and obstacles faced by women in rural areas and agriculture and made it impossible to design targeted policies to achieve gender equality. Considering the obligations from the Constitution of Montenegro and international documents such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform and the Sustainable Development Goals, intervention was necessary to harmonize the law with the standards of gender equality and inclusiveness. To this end, two amendments were proposed. The amendments to Articles 9 and 11 aimed to legally introduce the obligation to collect sex-disaggregated data, which would directly advance gender analysis in the agricultural sector.

The amendments allow for the data collected during the census to be disaggregated by sex, which opens the way for a comprehensive gender analysis in the agricultural sector. This allows for a better understanding of women's contributions to agricultural production, the identification of obstacles affecting them, and the design of more effective measures to support their participation and development. It also allows for monitoring the effects of policies and planning gender-sensitive interventions in the future.

Introducing a gender perspective into the agricultural census is crucial for achieving an equal society and inclusive development. Accurate and gender-disaggregated mapping of agricultural stakeholders enables decision-makers to direct resources to those most in need, to advance the economic empowerment of rural women, and to eliminate structural barriers. In addition to contributing to the realization of the constitutional principle of equality and respect for international obligations, this approach also contributes to better socio-economic development of rural areas and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

The EU rural development policy under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) requires the integration of equal opportunities principles and the collection of gender-disaggregated data to plan measures for more inclusive rural development. Gender analysis in the agricultural census is a tool for identifying needs and promoting women's economic empowerment, which is an EU priority in the context of sustainable agriculture.

By aligning the strategy with EU standards and gender equality benchmarks, these contributions also support Montenegro's EU integration process, particularly in meeting the criteria under Chapters 11, 18, 19, 20 and 25.

Title: The Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro

Status: Adoption by the Government pending

The law was amended to unify its language and promote gender sensitivity, especially regarding hiring practices and forming working bodies. Proposed changes require the Protector to focus on gender balance when employing staff and suggest appointing a deputy for gender equality. It was also proposed that when testing candidates' competencies, knowledge and abilities, a binding legal norm be envisaged that would regulate the obligation for candidates to possess competencies, knowledge and abilities in all relevant areas, including the area of gender equality. These actions align with regional best practices and CEDAW recommendations, which call for strengthening the Protector's role in gender equality matters. The reasons are obvious and include promoting equal opportunities for all; better representation and equity; diversity brings better results; gender equality as a global goal; combating discrimination and stereotypes; increasing trust in the institution.

Amendments have clarified when the Protector can act ex officio. Analysis of the public discourse suggests the Protector should be able to intervene independently, particularly in cases of hate speech - especially in public spaces or online, and with sexist hate speech. While consent is usually required from individuals who experience discrimination, it is considered beneficial and in the public interest for the Protector to act without consent when incidents occur publicly. This is of particular importance since hate speech is a very harmful phenomenon in society, which is difficult to suppress, spreads extremely quickly and is accessible to many people, and it is most often followed by hate crimes. Therefore, it is desirable that the Protector, when he assesses that it is necessary, can act on his own initiative and without consent.

The proposed changes to the Law on the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms would strengthen the institution's ability to promote gender equality and combat discrimination in a more proactive and visible manner. Introducing gender-sensitive language, requiring gender balance in hiring practices, and appointing a deputy responsible for gender equality would institutionalize a commitment to inclusion and diversity. Ensuring that candidates possess competencies in gender equality during recruitment processes would improve the internal capacity of the institution to recognize and respond to systemic inequalities. Expanding the Protector's mandate to act ex officio—especially in cases of public hate speech, including sexist and misogynistic speech—would enhance its role as an independent human rights watchdog. These changes would not only contribute to a more inclusive, fair, and effective institution, but also increase public trust and visibility of the Protector's role in addressing discrimination and gender-based harm in society.

The proposed amendments are in direct alignment with Montenegro's obligations under EU accession Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, which emphasizes strengthening independent institutions that protect human rights, combat discrimination, and promote equality. Enabling the Protector to act ex officio in cases of hate speech aligns with EU standards on freedom from discrimination and hate speech, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and relevant Council Framework Decisions on combating racism and xenophobia. The

emphasis on gender-sensitive recruitment, internal expertise, and a dedicated deputy for gender equality reflects best practices encouraged by the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and responds to CEDAW recommendations, which are also monitored in the EU enlargement process. These changes would represent tangible progress in aligning Montenegro’s institutional and legal framework with the EU acquis and international human rights standards.

Title: The Law on the Protection of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination

Status: Adopted by the Government

The proposed amendments to the Law on the Protection of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination were designed to reinforce gender equality as a core element of the national equality framework. They included provisions such as the explicit recognition of gender equality as a guiding principle of the law, the mandatory use of gender-sensitive language, the introduction of gender impact assessments for all policies, and expanded competencies of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data. Preventive and educational measures against gender-based violence, targeted actions to improve the position of women in underrepresented areas, and institutional support for victims of gender discrimination were also proposed.

These inputs, however, were not incorporated because lawmakers intended this general anti-discrimination law to regulate only the fundamental principles of equality, while leaving more detailed, group-specific provisions to be addressed in specialized legislation. In parallel, both the Ombudsman Law and the Gender Equality Law were under development, and it was expected that these targeted provisions would be embedded there, ensuring they receive more comprehensive and context-appropriate legal treatment.

The proposed amendments are fully aligned with Montenegro's EU accession commitments, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). The EU requires not only formal protection from discrimination, but also proactive policies to ensure equal opportunities. These proposals follow the spirit of EU Directives 2000/43/EC and 2006/54/EC and reflect the priorities of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, which calls for mainstreaming gender in all stages of policy development and implementation.

Title: The National Gender Equality Strategy 2025 - 2029

Status: Adopted by the Government

The new Gender Equality Strategy of Montenegro for the period 2025–2029 covers seven interrelated areas: normative and institutional framework, women's economic empowerment, education and science, political participation and decision-making, social and health protection, combating gender-based violence, and media and culture. The strategy was created based on the analysis of the previous strategic cycle and recommendations of international bodies (CEDAW, GREVIO, EC), with the broad participation of stakeholders from the state administration, civil society and the international community.

The strategy envisages key measures that include the development of a gender-responsive budgeting system, mandatory collection of gender-disaggregated data, strengthening mechanisms for preventing and responding to violence against women, improving women's political participation and institutionalizing gender-responsive plans in all sectors. These measures have the potential to transform the capacities of institutions, improve evidence-based decision-making, and contribute to combating systemic inequalities in all areas of social life.

The Strategy is closely linked to the draft of the new Law on Gender Equality, which strengthens institutional mechanisms, clearly defines the obligations of government bodies and enhances oversight of the implementation of equality policies. The Law obliges all levels of government to integrate a gender perspective into all phases of the development and implementation of public policies, making it a key instrument for achieving the strategic objectives defined in the Strategy. This establishes a synchronized and normatively based system that enables sustainability and measurability of progress in this area.

In the context of EU integration, both the Strategy and the Law directly contribute to the fulfillment of obligations under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and Chapter 19 (Social policy and employment). The establishment of gender-responsive mechanisms, indicators and records in line with the EU GAP III and the Istanbul Convention enables Montenegro to respond to key recommendations of the European Commission, particularly those concerning gender-based violence, political participation and institutional monitoring of progress. Through the coordinated implementation of the Strategy and the Law, a framework is created that can significantly improve equal access to resources, security and social justice, with greater accountability of all actors in the system.

By aligning the strategy with EU standards and gender equality benchmarks, these contributions also support Montenegro's EU integration process, particularly in meeting the criteria under Chapters 6, 11, 18, 19, 20, 23 and 24.

Title: The Law on Gender Equality

Status: Development of the Law ongoing

The UNDP assists the working group tasked with drafting the new Law on Gender Equality. This brief outlines the principal deficiencies of the current legislation and highlights the essential amendments that the proposed law aims to introduce.

The establishment of an independent Agency for Gender Equality constitutes a transformative institutional reform for Montenegro, one capable of addressing persistent gaps in the coordination, implementation, and oversight of gender equality policies. Designed as a centralized and autonomous entity, the Agency would be entrusted with a wide range of functions, including intersectoral coordination, policy supervision, licensing of gender experts, accreditation of training programs, and development of implementation standards. It would serve as the operational engine of a strengthened institutional framework, directly supporting the enforcement of gender equality obligations across the public and private sectors.

Crucially, these developments are embedded in a broader reform agenda that includes amendments to the Law on Gender Equality (LGE). These amendments aim to define concrete policy measures to promote and advance gender equality, mandate the use of gender impact assessments in policymaking, specify planning acts related to gender mainstreaming, and clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of state bodies, employers, and social partners. The introduction of gender experts within public administration, and the requirement of their involvement in all stages of policy development, will ensure that institutional practices reflect gender-sensitive perspectives. Additionally, the revised LGE will include sanctions for non-compliance, reinforcing the seriousness of state obligations.

Complementary reforms to the Law on Civil Servants will further operationalize the LGE by introducing affirmative selection measures in senior public administration ranks. Specifically, in cases where candidates are equally qualified, priority will be given to individuals from underrepresented genders—particularly within higher and expert management cadres. The provision also foresees the rejection of appointments that do not comply with gender-balanced representation, unless objectively justified. These measures collectively represent a significant shift toward institutionalizing gender equality across the policy cycle and public service.

If adequately financed and staffed, the Gender Equality Agency, supported by a robust legal and policy framework, has the potential to deliver lasting, systemic impact. It would enable comprehensive monitoring, ensure legal enforceability, and promote accountability, thereby aligning Montenegro's gender governance with European Union standards under Chapters 23 and 19. Ultimately, this would not only fulfill formal obligations, but also contribute to building a more inclusive, equitable, and responsive state.

By aligning the strategy with EU standards and gender equality benchmarks, these contributions also support Montenegro's EU integration process, particularly in meeting the criteria under Chapters 6, 11, 18, 19, 20, 23 and 24.

Title: The Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament

Status: Adopted by the Parliament

The proposed amendments to increase the quota for the underrepresented gender on electoral lists to 40%, as well as the amendment to the order of candidates of the underrepresented gender on electoral lists (for every three candidates there must be one candidate of the underrepresented gender), have been adopted and are now part of the Law on Amendments to the Law on the Election of Councilors and MPs, Article 39a, paragraph 1 and paragraph 2.

The recent adoption of the amendment to increase the quota for the less represented gender on electoral lists to 40% represents a significant step toward achieving substantive gender equality in political representation in Montenegro. Although women make up more than half of the population, their presence in elected bodies has remained low, and the previous 30% quota proved insufficient due to the placement of women in non-electable positions. Raising the quota creates a broader and more effective framework for the political participation of women and ensures more equitable representation in decision-making processes.

This intervention is expected to lead to a greater number of women in national and local parliaments, which will result in more inclusive and responsive public policy. Increased female participation in politics contributes to the development of policies that reflect the needs of the entire population and promotes issues such as social justice, health, education, and gender equality. Additionally, this measure sends a strong normative message that helps shift societal perceptions regarding women's role in political life.

Such an impact is essential for strengthening democracy and the legitimacy of institutions, as well as for fostering a political culture based on equal opportunities. It moves Montenegro beyond formal legal guarantees of equality toward substantive representation, empowering women to influence the political agenda and contribute to systemic change.

The measure is directly aligned with Montenegro's EU integration obligations, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), which includes gender equality and political participation as key benchmarks. The EU has repeatedly emphasized the need to improve the representation of women in decision-making roles, and this amendment responds to recommendations from the European Commission's progress reports, the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Beijing Platform for Action, and CEDAW. It demonstrates Montenegro's concrete progress in aligning national legislation and practice with EU democratic and human rights standards.

Title: The Law on the Government of Montenegro

Status: Adoption by the Government pending

The proposed amendments to the Law on the Government of Montenegro are aimed at ensuring gender equality in the highest executive body of government. The initiative includes the obligation that at least 40% of the members of the Government and the vice-president are from the less represented gender. In the event of an imbalance in the leadership position, it is envisaged that the Deputy Prime Minister will be of the opposite sex. The mandate holder is obliged to submit a report on the achieved gender balance to the Assembly along with the proposal of the composition of the Government. Also, transparency mechanisms are introduced through the public publication of the gender structure on the Government's website, mandatory gender analysis for all Government acts and assessment of the candidate's commitment to the principles of gender equality during the integrity check. The government would be obliged to regularly report to the Assembly and the public on progress in achieving gender equality.

These changes have the potential to transform the Government into a more inclusive and representative body that reflects the real composition of society and reinforces the institutional commitment to equality. The 40% quota and mandatory gender analysis in decision-making processes enable the systemic integration of a gender perspective and reduce structural discrimination. Transparent reporting and gender-based vetting of candidates strengthen public trust and raise standards of political accountability and the balance of power in the executive branch.

The proposed changes are in line with Montenegro's commitments in the EU integration process, under Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, which covers the prohibition of discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunities in political and public life. These measures draw on the guidelines of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, which encourages gender balance in decision-making and calls on Member States and candidates to ensure a minimum participation of women in government. Through quotas, gender analysis and mandatory reporting, Montenegro would align with EU best practices and international obligations, including the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and the Istanbul Convention, which require gender-sensitive public policy and equal access to decision-making places.

Title: The Law on the Parliament of Montenegro

Status: Working body has not officially begun development of the draft.

The proposed amendments to the Law on the Parliament of Montenegro are designed to incorporate gender-sensitive language throughout the law. These amendments include provisions for gender-balanced representation in positions such as the President and Vice-President of the Parliament, members of the Collegium, working bodies and committees, and international delegations. The changes also introduce requirements for educational programs on gender equality and regular reporting on the status of gender equality and the measures implemented.

The implementation of these amendments contributes to the creation of a gender-sensitive and inclusive legislative environment, which strengthens democratic processes and citizens' trust in institutions. Gender-balanced representation at all levels of decision-making within the Parliament can improve the quality of decision-making and ensure that different perspectives are represented. Education and sensitization of MPs and employees will encourage the creation of an environment free from discrimination and gender-based violence, while clear quotas and oversight mechanisms will ensure the efficient implementation of legal norms.

These amendments significantly contribute to the harmonization of Montenegro's legal system with key European standards on gender equality, which is one of the essential criteria in the process of accession to the European Union. Strengthening institutional capacities for gender equality and introducing gender-sensitive legal frameworks demonstrate Montenegro's serious commitment to EU values and represent a concrete step towards the full implementation of the principle of gender equality in line with the Acquis Communautaire.

Title: The Law on Local Self-Government

Status: Adoption by the Government pending

The proposed amendments to the Law on Local Self-Government aim to institutionalize gender equality in all aspects of local governance - decision-making, planning, budgeting, and reporting. It is proposed that municipal assemblies establish mechanisms to ensure gender balance in all working and advisory bodies and integrate gender perspectives into all decisions, regulations, and programs. Public body formation decisions would include not only roles and responsibilities but also mechanisms to ensure gender-balanced membership and equitable representation in leadership positions. The statute of each municipality would be required to contain specific provisions guaranteeing gender equality, and a gender analysis would be mandatory for the adoption of all acts, decisions, and strategic plans.

The mayor would be obliged to act in accordance with the principles of gender equality, ensure gender analysis in all acts, promote gender balance across local administration and services, implement gender-responsive planning and budgeting, provide regular staff training, and report on results. One deputy mayor would have to come from the less represented gender. All local bodies would be required to collect sex-disaggregated data and provide services in a non-discriminatory, gender-sensitive manner.

The amendments introduce mandatory gender-responsive budgeting through requiring that all financial planning, execution, and reporting include gender analysis to ensure that public funds meet the needs of both women and men. Local human resource plans and databases would be required to include data on gender representation. In local communities, at least 40% of decision-making body members must be from the less represented gender. Gender-balanced participation in community governance would help reflect diverse needs and perspectives, improve the quality of local initiatives, and strengthen fairness and inclusion in access to resources and opportunities.

These changes would significantly enhance the functionality and legitimacy of local government by promoting inclusive policymaking and more equitable distribution of resources. They would enable the development of evidence-based and gender-sensitive public services, improve the accountability of local authorities, and strengthen the participation of women at all levels of governance.

The proposed amendments are closely aligned with Montenegro's EU accession commitments, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), which emphasizes anti-discrimination, equal participation, and good governance. They also support the implementation of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, which promotes gender mainstreaming in all public policy domains, including at the local level. Furthermore, the proposals contribute to fulfilling recommendations from CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the European Commission, which continue to call for stronger gender equality mechanisms and local-level implementation across candidate countries.

Title: The Law on Civil Servants and State Employees

Status: Adopted by the Parliament

The proposed amendments to the Law on Civil Servants and State Employees aim to institutionalize gender equality across all stages of employment, career advancement, and the exercise of labor rights within public administration.

It is proposed to introduce a provision in the general principles stating that public administration must act in accordance with the principles of gender equality. Articles related to recruitment and appointment (e.g. Articles 24 and 28) would be amended to require balanced gender representation, especially in leadership roles, and to allow preference for equally qualified candidates from the underrepresented gender. The amendments also introduce mandatory monitoring and reporting on gender balance in public service and the implementation of measures to promote equal representation. Articles 61 and 66 would be amended to guarantee job protection during pregnancy, parental, and maternity leave, along with the right to return to the same or equivalent position. Additionally, state institutions would be required to organize regular gender equality training and strengthen protection from discrimination by updating provisions on disciplinary proceedings (e.g. Articles 100 and 101), including safeguards for whistleblowers who report gender-based discrimination or harassment.

These changes would significantly strengthen the capacity of the civil service to function as an inclusive, fair, and gender-sensitive system. Clear and enforceable measures would help close gender gaps in leadership, ensure protection of parental rights, reduce discrimination, and provide greater legal security for employees. Regular training and gender-disaggregated data collection would support a culture of equality and continuous improvement in human resource policies.

Inputs related to maternity and parental leave are partially accepted. The new provisions foresee the possibility of appointing acting heads during periods of maternity, parental, or childcare leave, while at the same time stipulating that any transfer to another position may only be carried out with the written consent of employees on such leave.

The proposed amendments are directly aligned with Montenegro's EU accession process, particularly under Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights. They support compliance with EU standards on equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including the implementation of directives such as 2006/54/EC on equal treatment in employment, 2010/41/EU, and 2012/29/EU concerning the rights of workers and victims of discrimination. The amendments are also in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, which promotes gender-balanced public institutions and gender-sensitive policymaking as key pillars of modern, democratic, and effective governance. Their adoption would represent a concrete step forward in harmonizing Montenegro's legislation with the EU acquis in the field of human rights and public administration reform.

Title: Company Law

Status: Adopted by the Parliament

Despite existing laws and policies, women in Montenegro continue to face significant obstacles in the economy – particularly in accessing management positions, finance, business networks and opportunities for advancement. The Law on Commercial Companies does not sufficiently recognize gender inequalities in the business sector nor establish mechanisms to overcome them. The proposed amendments are necessary to introduce explicit instruments for the promotion of gender equality into the law, increase transparency through reporting and monitoring, and enable the institutional strengthening of the role of women in the economy.

The proposed amendments to the Law on Commercial Companies aim to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of business, including management, employment, reporting, access to resources and education. Interventions include the obligation of a minimum representation of women in management structures (40%), regular reporting on the gender structure of employees, the promotion of gender equality in employment, incentives for women entrepreneurs (e.g. tax incentives) and special measures for women in rural areas (the right to additional incentives and support programs, including grants and education). The introduction of these mechanisms ensures a systemic approach to promote economic equality, creates conditions for increased participation of women in the economy and contributes to breaking down structural barriers in the business sector.

The adoption of the proposed amendments is expected to increase the participation of women in the management bodies of companies, more equal treatment in employment and promotion, better access to resources, and greater visibility of women's contributions to the economy. Regular reporting and monitoring will enable progress to be tracked and policies to be directed towards areas where gender imbalances are most pronounced, while incentives and education for women entrepreneurs, especially in rural areas, would contribute to reducing economic inequality and greater inclusion.

These measures enable not only legal, but also substantive equality between women and men in the business sector. The introduction of a gender perspective into the law contributes to the creation of a sustainable, fair and competitive economy, and fulfils Montenegro's democratic and development obligations. It also strengthens the resilience of society to economic and social crises through the full valorisation of women's economic potential and contributes to social cohesion.

The interventions directly contribute to alignment with the obligations under Chapter 23 (especially in the part on the prohibition of discrimination and the achievement of equal opportunities) and Chapter 6 (commercial law), where the EU promotes good corporate governance, transparency and gender balance. They are aligned with Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment of women and men in employment and vocational training, as well as with the principles of the EU Strategy for Gender Equality 2020–2025, which particularly emphasizes the importance of gender balance in economic decision-making and the participation of women in

business life. In this way, Montenegro demonstrates concrete progress in meeting the political and legal criteria for EU membership.

Title: The Law on the Credit Guarantee Fund

Status: Adopted by the Parliament (without our inputs)

The proposed amendments to the Law on the Credit Guarantee Fund aim to integrate gender equality principles across all aspects of the Fund's operations—from governance and employment to financial policies and services. The amendments introduce the mandatory use of gender-sensitive language (Article 4), ensure non-discriminatory application procedures and targeted support for women entrepreneurs through training, outreach, and eased conditions (Articles 5–9), and require tailored procedures in enforcement processes (Article 10). Structural changes include a requirement that at least 40% of the Fund's Board members come from the less represented gender, along with the mandatory appointment of a gender equality expert (Article 20). Internal policies promoting gender equality in employment (Article 29), gender-sensitive risk management (Article 30), and mandatory collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated data (Articles 31–33) are also introduced. The amendments establish oversight mechanisms for monitoring gender equality implementation (Article 34) and ensure gender balance during board member selection (Article 35). Additional proposals include the creation of a dedicated support program for women entrepreneurs and the implementation of mandatory gender equality training and awareness campaigns for Fund staff and beneficiaries.

These changes have the potential to significantly improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs, eliminate barriers to using guarantee mechanisms, and institutionalize gender-sensitive policies for long-term economic equality. Tailored criteria, reduced fees, and extended repayment periods for women-led businesses will improve inclusion in sectors where women have traditionally been underrepresented. The introduction of systemic monitoring, gender-sensitive audits, and institutional training contributes to building an organizational culture grounded in equality and fairness. The law would thus evolve from a purely financial instrument into a platform for promoting women's economic empowerment and inclusive development.

The proposed amendments are closely aligned with Montenegro's EU accession commitments, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 20 (Enterprise and Industrial Policy). EU standards call for proactive measures to eliminate gender-based discrimination in access to finance and to promote women's entrepreneurship—highlighted in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and European Commission progress reports on Montenegro. Provisions on gender-sensitive budgeting, reporting, and supervision also align with EU Directive 2014/95/EU on non-financial reporting and SME development strategies. Their adoption would represent a concrete step toward harmonizing national legislation with the EU acquis and fulfilling strategic goals for gender equality in the economy.

Title: The Law on the Registration of Business and Other Entities

Status: Adopted by the Parliament (without our inputs)

The proposed amendments to the Law on Registration of Business and Other Entities introduce the integration of a gender perspective through several systemic interventions. Key changes relate to the obligation to use gender-sensitive language in the text of the law and accompanying documents (Art. 2), specifying definitions to exclude gender bias (Art. 3), and introducing the obligation to submit data on the gender structure of founders, owners, employees and members of management bodies (Art. 10, 16, 22). Also, mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on gender balance are proposed, as well as sanctioning entities that fail to meet these obligations (Art. 44), with additional measures aimed at public institutions and obligations for gender equality education (Art. 12 and 45). The amendments aim to create an institutional framework that enables systematic monitoring and promotion of gender equality in the business sector.

Introducing gender-sensitive norms into the law can promote a business environment where women and men have equal representation, including in decision-making roles. Collecting and disclosing gender data accurately may increase transparency and allow for policies that address existing inequalities. Standardizing gender balance within public institutions and businesses has the potential to affect organizational culture, and the use of punitive measures signals a structured approach to implementation. Collectively, these actions aim to support the development of a labor market with balanced gender representation and socially responsible entrepreneurship.

The integration of gender equality into the legislative framework on the registration of entities directly contributes to the alignment with EU standards, especially in the field of the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination (Chapters 19 – Social Policy and Employment, and 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights). This approach demonstrates the institutional readiness to treat gender balance not only as a matter of social justice, but also as a component of effective economic policy. By improving the collection of gender-disaggregated data and introducing accountability mechanisms, Montenegro demonstrates its commitment to building an inclusive and European-harmonized business environment.

Title: The Criminal Code of Montenegro

Status: Draft Law development by WG ongoing

The proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Montenegro aim to introduce femicide as a distinct criminal offense, in line with the obligations stemming from the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Although Montenegro ratified the Convention in 2013, the legal framework still lacks gender-sensitive provisions that recognize femicide as the most extreme form of gender-based violence. Existing norms remain gender-neutral and insufficiently address the specific vulnerability of women. Reports by GREVIO and the European Commission have expressed concern over the rising number of femicides and the mild sentencing practices of courts.

The proposal includes amending Article 142 by introducing a definition of gender-based violence: *"Gender-based violence against women is violence directed at a woman because she is a woman or that disproportionately affects women."* Additionally, Article 144, paragraph 1 would be expanded with three new grounds under which a murder would qualify as femicide:

- when the victim is a woman, a family or household member, previously subjected to physical, psychological, or sexual violence by the perpetrator, and killed because of her sex;
- when the murder is committed with torture motivated by hatred based on the victim's sex;
- when the murder is motivated by hatred due to gender identity or other circumstances that indicate gender-based violence.

Adopting these amendments would allow courts and prosecutors to properly qualify femicide, impose stricter sentences, and provide better legal recognition of the root causes of such crimes. It would contribute to stronger prevention of violence against women, restore trust in the justice system, and help generate more accurate statistics for shaping future policy.

This legal reform is directly aligned with EU Directive 2024/1385, which requires member and candidate states to establish a clear legal framework for combating violence against women, including femicide. It also supports Montenegro's obligations under Chapter 23 of the EU accession process, and implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Defining femicide in the Criminal Code is not only a formal harmonization with EU standards but a necessary step to effectively protect women's lives and human rights.

Title: The Law on Misdemeanors

Status: Draft Law development by WG ongoing

The proposed amendments to the Law on Misdemeanors aim to introduce a gender-sensitive approach to the misdemeanor system in Montenegro, ensuring that the law more effectively recognizes, addresses, and prevents gender-based discrimination and violence. Although Article 10a already references gender-sensitive language, the amendment strengthens it by stating that all provisions of the law must be interpreted and applied in line with the principle of gender equality.

A new article is proposed to define and sanction gender-based discrimination as a misdemeanor, including harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. Another proposed article introduces the obligation to collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data in misdemeanor records—covering perpetrators, victims, and sanctions—so that the system can be evaluated through a gender lens. This is reinforced by an amendment to Article 53, which expands the content of misdemeanor records to include data on the gender of perpetrators and victims.

To prevent the trivialization of gender-based misdemeanors, an amendment to Article 33 ensures that alternative sanctions such as warnings or suspended sentences are not applied in cases involving gender discrimination. A new article introduces special protection measures for victims of such misdemeanors, including confidentiality, special conditions for testimony, and other protective actions.

Additionally, the proposal calls for mandatory gender equality training for all actors in misdemeanor proceedings - judges, prosecutors, and police officers - so that institutional awareness and sensitivity are strengthened across the system. Collectively, these amendments would align the law with international standards of gender equality and ensure that the misdemeanor system becomes a tool not only of punishment but of structural change and prevention.

The proposed amendments to the Law on Misdemeanors are directly aligned with Montenegro's EU integration commitments, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), which requires effective protection against discrimination and access to justice for all, especially vulnerable groups. By introducing provisions that recognize and sanction gender-based misdemeanors, ensure gender-sensitive procedures, mandate data collection disaggregated by sex, and provide victim protection measures, these changes support alignment with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, as well as relevant directives such as 2006/54/EC on equal treatment and 2012/29/EU on victims' rights. Additionally, the amendments reflect standards of the Istanbul Convention, which the EU promotes as a benchmark for combating gender-based violence. Their adoption would represent concrete progress in harmonizing Montenegro's legal framework with EU human rights and equality standards.

Title: Law on Protection from Domestic Violence

Status: WG has not been established yet

The proposed amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence represent a key reform step through which Montenegro can fundamentally strengthen the system of prevention, protection, and support for victims, particularly women, who, according to all research, remain the most frequently exposed to domestic violence. These amendments go beyond technical harmonization with the EU acquis, as they directly respond to the recommendations of the European Commission, GREVIO, and the CEDAW Committee. They are designed to reinforce the institutional response, standardize procedures, and raise the level of protection to the highest European standards.

The new text of the law introduces clearer and more comprehensive definitions of violence, explicitly recognizes gender-based violence against women and girls, expands the circle of protected persons, and removes legal gaps that have until now limited access to rights. This guarantees victims timely and equal protection across the entire country, with mandatory risk assessments and clearly prescribed institutional steps from the moment of reporting until the conclusion of proceedings.

The law introduces strong protection measures that enable urgent intervention even before formal proceedings are initiated, including a safety plan prepared jointly with the victim and a prohibition on lifting protective measures without the victim's consent. It also establishes the obligation for all professionals handling domestic violence cases—police, social welfare centers, prosecutors, courts, and service providers—to undergo specialized training on gender perspectives and prevention of gender-based violence. This ensures that the institutional response is professional, sensitive, and fully aligned with international standards.

Special importance is given to strengthening institutional coordination through mandatory protocols, appointment of contact persons, and effective information exchange, alongside stricter control of access to firearms and significant tightening of criminal provisions, particularly in cases of violence against children or in their presence as witnesses.

By adopting this law, Montenegro will not only meet key negotiation benchmarks under Chapter 23 and fulfill its international obligations under the Istanbul Convention, but also demonstrate readiness to build a sustainable, integrated, and victim-centered system where the right to a life free from violence is guaranteed to all. The amendments to the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence constitute a substantive step forward in dismantling entrenched gender stereotypes and patriarchal patterns that normalize violence, clearly affirming that traditional gender roles cannot justify violations of the rights and dignity of women and girls. A life free from violence is a fundamental human right that the state must consistently protect. This sends a clear signal that human rights reforms in Montenegro are not merely declarative but concrete, irreversible, and focused on safeguarding the lives, dignity, and safety of the most vulnerable members of society.

Through comments and suggestions, made a significant contribution to strengthening the gender perspective in the text is provided:

- clearer and more comprehensive definitions of gender-based violence against women and girls;
- the introduction of a mandatory requirement for all professionals (police, social welfare centers, prosecutors, courts, service providers) to undergo specialized training on gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence;
- strengthening institutional coordination through mandatory protocols and the appointment of contact persons;
- a prohibition on lifting protective measures without the consent of the victim;
- additional protection for women in situations of multiple discrimination (e.g. women with disabilities, Roma women, women in rural areas);
- stricter control of firearm possession and tougher criminal provisions in cases of violence against children or in their presence.

The envisaged inputs within the Law would guarantee a sustainable, integrated, and victim-centered protection system, with clear measures of prevention and support, in line with the Istanbul Convention and international gender equality standards.

Title: The Law on Non-Governmental Organizations

Status: Draft Law development by WG ongoing

The proposed amendments to the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations introduce eight specific provisions aimed at strengthening gender equality standards within the civil society sector. A new Article 22a establishes that neither gender may be represented with less than 40% in the governing bodies of NGOs. Article 19a calls for the creation of dedicated funds and programs to support NGOs working on gender equality and women's rights. Additional amendments (Articles 19b–19g) introduce mandatory gender sensitivity training, systems for monitoring and reporting on gender-related activities, centralized financing for NGOs providing services to victims of gender-based violence, the verification and accreditation of such organizations, and the inclusion of gender experts and civil society representatives in the evaluation and funding decision-making processes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is assigned as the main oversight and coordinating body for these initiatives.

These amendments have the potential to significantly enhance the role of NGOs in advancing gender equality, professionalize the sector, and ensure more effective support for women and survivors of violence. By introducing gender quotas in leadership structures, formal support for gender-focused initiatives, and clear obligations around transparency, monitoring, and accountability, the law creates a more inclusive and responsive civil society environment. Strengthening NGO capacities through continuous training and regulated funding processes fosters institutional sustainability, public trust, and long-term social impact.

The proposed changes are aligned with Montenegro's EU accession obligations, particularly under Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment). The EU places strong emphasis on empowering civil society, promoting gender equality, and supporting victims of violence—principles reflected in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, CEDAW recommendations, and the standards of the Istanbul Convention. By introducing transparent, inclusive mechanisms for funding and oversight, Montenegro would further strengthen its institutional framework for equality and demonstrate genuine progress in aligning national legislation with the EU *acquis* and core European values.

Title: The Law on Social and Child Protection

Status: Draft Law development by WG is ongoing

The Draft Law on Social and Child Protection represents a unique opportunity for Montenegro to establish a modern, inclusive, and sustainable system that fully reflects contemporary European standards of human rights, gender equality, and integrated service provision. It shifts the focus from passive assistance toward a development-oriented and proactive approach that empowers beneficiaries, prevents risks, and promotes social inclusion.

A key priority is the full integration of a gender perspective to ensure equal access to rights and services for women and men, girls and boys, as well as persons of diverse gender identities. Interventions on the draft law were aimed at embedding the gender perspective into definitions, objectives, and measures, with explicit recognition of the specific needs of women and men—particularly survivors of gender-based violence, women survivors of domestic violence, single parents, caregivers, and other groups whose access to rights is strongly influenced by gender and gender roles and stereotypes.

The proposed amendments remove discriminatory provisions, secure fairer access for all beneficiaries—including foreign citizens and stateless persons—and strengthen protection for specific categories, such as survivors of violence, by prohibiting perpetrators from using or managing rights under this system where it would endanger the safety, dignity, or best interest of the victim. They also advocate for clear restrictions preventing persons convicted of violence, especially gender-based violence and violence against children, from holding managerial functions, serving on governing bodies, or obtaining professional licenses. The licensing and relicensing process must include mandatory training and testing on gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence, ensuring professional and gender-sensitive practice.

The introduction of quotas for gender-balanced representation in the governance structures of the social and child protection system opens space for genuine participation of women in decision-making, ensures a fairer distribution of power, and strengthens institutions in line with the principles of gender equality.

The importance of precisely regulating disability assessment through a unified, non-discriminatory, and gender-sensitive methodology is also emphasized, ensuring that needs assessments are objective and consistent across all municipalities and institutions. Further improvements include extending material benefits to cover housing costs, clarifying the definition of one-off assistance, prolonging entitlement periods for certain categories, and enabling continued allowances for long-term caregivers without age restrictions. Activation of work-capable beneficiaries through socially useful work must be accompanied by strong protective mechanisms, while clearly defined services should enable coordinated responses with the health, education, employment, justice, and police sectors.

By adopting these solutions, Montenegro will not only meet key benchmarks under Chapters 19 and 23 and fully align with the European Pillar of Social Rights but also send a clear political

message of readiness to build a system that guarantees social justice, equality, and inclusion, firmly grounded in European values and standards.

Through comments and suggestions, the Gender Team significantly contributed to making the Draft Law on Social and Child Protection more inclusive and gender-sensitive. In particular, we emphasized:

- removal of discriminatory provisions and introduction of clear bans preventing perpetrators of gender-based violence from using or managing rights within the system;
- mandatory training and testing of professionals on gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence;
- introduction of quotas for gender-balanced participation in governance structures;
- development of a gender-sensitive methodology for disability assessment;
- extension of rights and benefits (housing, allowances for caregivers) in a way that recognizes gender roles in care and support;
- strengthening coordination of social protection with health, education, employment, justice, and police sectors, while taking into account the specific needs of women and men.

Contribution will ensure that the Law is not viewed merely as a formal legal framework but as an instrument of gender justice and equality, fully aligned with international standards (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, Beijing Platform for Action, EU standards).

With these inputs the Law would guarantee that women and men, girls and boys have equal access to rights, resources, and services, making social and child protection a genuine mechanism of equality and social justice.

Title: The Labour Law

Status: Adoption by the Government pending

The reform of Montenegro's Labour Law is unfolding through several cycles of amendments planned by the Ministry of Labour under the Government's Work Plan for 2025, each aimed at further alignment with the EU acquis under Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and the conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) ratified by Montenegro.

The first cycle of amendments, launched in 2024 and adoption by the Government is pending. Its primary objective is to harmonize with Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers and to align the Labour Law with the Law on Same-Sex Partnership. From a gender equality perspective, the most important change is the introduction of mandatory parental leave for fathers (a minimum of two months, non-transferable to the mother), which will help balance private and professional responsibilities and facilitate women's reintegration into the labour market. This part of the reform was already underway when the Project started.

The second cycle of amendments, expected for adoption in the fourth quarter of 2025, is particularly significant from the perspective of substantive gender equality. It aims to transpose Directive (EU) 2023/970 on equal pay and pay transparency and Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on adequate minimum wages. Project provided support to the Working group through this process. These changes will establish pay transparency as a key tool to dismantle hidden forms of discrimination that disproportionately affect women, ensure that anti-discrimination provisions are explicitly linked to gender, address the specific impact of minimum wage regulations on women who are overrepresented in low-paid and insecure jobs, and introduce stronger protective mechanisms for women who report discrimination.

A third cycle of amendments is also planned, focusing on protection from violence at the workplace. UNDP is providing support to this process, with the aim to contribute that new law to ensure prevention and response mechanisms that will further strengthen the rights and security of workers, particularly women, in line with EU and ILO standards.

Taken together, these reform cycles mark a transformative shift in Montenegro's labour legislation. By embedding provisions on work-life balance, equal pay, pay transparency, minimum wages, and protection from workplace violence, they not only bring the country closer to closing Chapter 19 in the EU accession process but also reshape the labour market into a more open, fair, and accountable system.

Title: Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Montenegro 2025–2029, with Action Plan 2025–2027

Status: Draft document developed by WG

The Draft Strategy for the Development of the Social and Solidarity Economy represents the first comprehensive strategic document through which Montenegro explicitly recognizes the social and solidarity economy as an important mechanism for improving employability, social inclusion, and sustainable local development. The document is based on the European concept of the social economy and is aligned with key international frameworks, including the European Commission's Action Plan for the Social Economy, EU Council Recommendations, the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Strategy views the social and solidarity economy not only as a market activity with a social purpose but also as an instrument that simultaneously contributes to economic growth, employment, and addressing structural social challenges. It particularly highlights its potential to create new jobs for vulnerable groups—including women, youth, persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, the long-term unemployed, and the elderly—through innovative business models and sustainable sources of income.

Through our support, the gender perspective has been significantly strengthened in the Draft Strategy. Strategy recognizes women, especially those from marginalized communities, as key drivers of change in the social and solidarity economy. It foresees measures to empower them—easier access to financing, mentorship, strengthening leadership skills, and promoting women's entrepreneurship within the social economy.

The Strategy also acknowledges the multiple discrimination women face and foresees tools that directly respond to their needs, positioning the social and solidarity economy as an instrument of gender justice.

These changes aligned the document with international standards (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, EU standards), while gender equality became an integral part of its overall goal—creating new opportunities for employment, inclusion, and sustainable development.

The Action Plan, defined within the Strategy, sets out concrete measures and indicators: development of a legal framework for the social and solidarity economy, establishment of a register of social enterprises, creation of financial instruments tailored to their needs, strengthening the capacities of employees and entrepreneurs, support for socially innovative services, and the promotion of socially responsible public procurement. The document also emphasizes the importance of the local level, providing for the strengthening of municipal capacities and partnerships between the public, private, and civil sectors.

From the perspective of European integration, the Strategy directly contributes to fulfilling obligations under Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment), Chapter 20 (Enterprise and

Industrial Policy), and Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) by promoting equal opportunities, reducing inequalities, and strengthening social cohesion.

If adequately financed and implemented, the Strategy has the potential to transform Montenegro's approach to employment, social inclusion, and sustainable development, positioning the social and solidarity economy as a key instrument of economic resilience and social justice. Its adoption would send a strong signal of Montenegro's readiness to develop policies that link economic growth with social impact, fully aligned with European values and standards.

Title: Foreign Policy Strategy

Status: Under development

To support the development of the new Foreign Policy Strategy, UNDP has prepared an analysis of trends in Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) to help shape the strategic framework. The analysis outlines the evolution, principles, and practical application of FFP globally, with a focus on European good practices, and highlights its relevance for Montenegro's positioning in international relations.

The document explains that FFP shifts foreign policy away from traditional power dynamics focused on military strength and economic dominance, towards a people-centered approach emphasizing gender equality, human rights, inclusive governance, peacebuilding, and sustainable development.

Key international frameworks underpinning FFP include CEDAW, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality). Case studies of Sweden, France, and Spain illustrate how FFP has been operationalized through strategic priorities such as women's participation in diplomacy and peace processes, gender-responsive budgeting, inclusion in decision-making, and institutionalized mechanisms for monitoring and accountability.

For Montenegro, the analysis identifies several benefits of embedding FFP in the Foreign Policy Strategy:

- Strengthening international reputation as a progressive and values-driven small state aligned with modern global standards.
- Maximizing influence with limited resources by focusing on human security, equality, and peacebuilding.
- Supporting EU accession goals (Chapters 23 and 31), by aligning with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GAP III), and the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019–2024).
- Complementing domestic gender equality efforts and positioning Montenegro as a regional leader in inclusive governance.
- Building international partnerships with countries and institutions already advancing FFP (e.g. Sweden, France, Spain, Iceland, Slovenia, Canada, Mexico).

The analysis also recommends that Montenegro adapt the FFP concept to its national context, ensure inter-ministerial cooperation, and develop a roadmap with measurable indicators, training programmes, and communication tools to institutionalize gender perspectives across diplomacy.

By integrating FFP into its upcoming Foreign Policy Strategy, Montenegro has the opportunity to project a distinct and forward-looking diplomatic identity, reinforce its EU integration process, and contribute to building a more just, inclusive, and secure international order.

Anex II

Consultants

1. Jovana Davidović

Consultant to support development of knowledge products and capacity development in the area of gender equality

Ms. Jovana Davidovic has supported development of Gender Equality Profile and Assessment of Practices and Identifying Gender Mainstreaming Opportunities in Government policy development.

She has also supported capacity development efforts done through Project in several institutions, including Secretariat General.

Jovana was hired to support other projects within Gender cluster, hence the note on days spent at this Project are provided above.

Deliverables:

- Comprehensive knowledge products that included desk review, data collection from partnering institutions and consultation process: *Assesment on Governement practices Gender Equality Profile*
- Development and delivery of training sessions for various institutions
- Adaptation of content for a Digital Gender Platform
- Supported high-level communications event through the development of a multimedia presentation and coverage of media and social media content.

2. Snežana Jonica

Consultant to support the Gender Mainstreaming in EU integration

Ms. Snežana Jonica was engaged as a gender expert to support the Ministry of European Affairs in integrating gender equality into its EU integration portfolio. Her responsibilities included conducting a detailed gender analysis of the Ministry's coordination role with line ministries, identifying opportunities to embed gender perspectives in policy processes. She provided analytical inputs and legislative recommendations to strengthen gender responsiveness in the EU accession process, with a focus on women's empowerment. She supported coordination with partners, including parliamentary committees, to advance the adoption of gender-responsive policies.

Deliverables:

- Conducted an analysis of the Government's 2024 Work Plan, identifying laws and strategic documents relevant to the gender equality process and their planned deadlines;
- Guiding questions for MEA regarding legal and institutional framework on gender equality in Montenegro;
- Gender analyses and recommendations for MEA Action plan (further developed and included in Draft Action plan by Mr. Savić)
- **Law on Agricultural Census** – Adopted in July 2024 in the Parliament. Integrated inputs that will ensure analysis of the life of women in rural areas. The preliminary findings of Agricultural Census have been presented while complete findings, including those related to the position of women in rural areas are expected in September 2025.
- **Law on the Government** - Public consultations were conducted from December 1 to December 16, 2023. No further public consultations were held after this initial round. Inputs were shared with the Head of the Working Group. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the fourth quarter of 2025.
- **Law on the Parliament** – Inputs developed. There are no official information regarding the timeline or the process of development of the Law but it is expected that it will coincide with the adoption of the Law on Government.
- **Law on Non-Governmental Organizations** – Inputs developed. The Working Group was established in December 2024, following the transfer of the Law to a new ministry. The group's work is ongoing. It has been agreed with the Head of the Working Group that these inputs will be shared once the first draft of the Law is prepared. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Civil Servants and State Employees** – Inputs were shared with the Head of the Working Group. Input that defines the protection of the workplace during maternity and parental leave (Article 66) is integral part of the proposed law. Law has entered parliamentary procedure. It is expected to be adopted by the end of July.
- **Law on Local Self-Government** - Public consultations were held from December 1 to December 16, 2023. UNDP submitted inputs, 13 of which were accepted and incorporated into Article 51, which establishes the obligation to include gender analysis in all aspects of local self-government work. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law was scheduled for adoption in the first quarter of 2025. The draft Law was finalized and published on May 31, 2025, and is now pending presentation and adoption by the Government, which is expected by the end of the second quarter.
- **Company Law (from legal perspective)** – Inputs were shared with the Head of the Working Group. Provisions on the mandatory participation of women in management bodies (quotas), in line with Directive 2022/2381 are included in the Draft Law on Companies, which is currently undergoing alignment with the European Commission. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the second quarter of 2025.

- **Law on the Credit Guarantee Fund (from legal perspective)** – Inputs shared with Head of the Working group. The Government approved the Proporsla of the Law which is now in Parliamentary procedure. Inputs were not accepted with the explanation that the act was already in the process of being submitted to the Government of Montenegro, making further alignment unlikely.
- **Law on Misdemeanors** – Inputs developed and shared with the Head of Working group, which work is still ongoing. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the third quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Protection of Equality and Non-Discrimination** – Inputs developed and shared with Working group which work on draft Law is still in progress. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the second quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Gender Equality** – Initial inputs developed to inform future Law. Working Group has been established. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the first quarter of 2026.

3. Ivana Raščanin Radičević

Ms. Ivana Raščanin Radičević is deployed to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demographics, where she provides technical expertise to support the integration of gender equality into both institutions' mandates. Her responsibilities include day-to-day support to the ministries' work, contributing to internal capacity development, and preparing strategic inputs for policy documents. She works closely with senior management to promote institutional alignment with EU requirements and ensure a coherent approach to gender equality across programs and strategies. Her role also includes coordinating inputs into sectoral policies that address employment, social protection, and family care from a gender-responsive perspective.

Deliverables:

- Action plan for Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Dialogue.
- Supported development and delivery of trainings for the respective Ministry and Supreme State Prosecution.
- **Strategy for Social and Child Protection** – Adopted in December 2024. 13 out of 16 inputs developed were accepted and are integral part of the Strategy.
- **Strategy for Deinstitutionalization** - Adopted in December 2024. 10 out of 18 inputs developed were accepted and are integral part of the Strategy.
- **Law on Non-Governmental Organizations** – Inputs developed. The Working Group was established in December 2024, following the transfer of the Law to a new ministry. The group's work is ongoing. It has been agreed with the Head of the Working Group that these inputs will be shared once the first draft of the Law is prepared. According to the

Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.

- **Social Entrepreneurship Strategy** – Draft Strategy developed by Working group. Consultant provided inputs which will be shared with WG officially. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Social Entrepreneurship** – Working group established and consultant is part of it. Inputs are under development. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the fourth quarter of 2025.
- **Labour Law** – Inputs under development and consultant will be observing Working group. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the fourth quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Social and Child Protection** – Initial inputs developed, while final inputs are under development and will be shared with group, as agreed with Head of WG upon initial draft is developed. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law was planned for the second quarter of 2025, which will be postponed since the WG has not completed its work yet. It has been agreed with the Ministry to organize two expert discussions related to licensing and application of GBV procedures.
- **Law on Protection from Domestic Violence** – Development of inputs is in final phase. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.

4. Jelena Zvizdojević

Consultant to Support Gender Mainstreaming and Economic Development policies

Ms. Jelena Zvizdojevic is engaged in strengthening the integration of gender perspectives within Montenegro's economic policy and legislative frameworks. Her work involves analyzing existing economic laws and proposing targeted amendments that support equitable economic development and address gender disparities. She also provides strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing women's economic empowerment, ensuring alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and other international standards. Her inputs contribute to more inclusive economic planning and the development of policies that reflect the needs and contributions of both women and men in the economy.

Jelena was hired to support other projects within Gender cluster, hence the note on days spent at this Project are provided above.

Deliverables:

- **Company Law (from economic perspective)** – Inputs were shared with the Head of the Working Group. Provisions on the mandatory participation of women in management

bodies (quotas), in line with Directive 2022/2381 are included in the Draft Law on Companies, which is currently undergoing alignment with the European Commission. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the second quarter of 2025.

- **Law on the Credit Guarantee Fund (from economic perspective)** – Inputs shared with Head of the Working group. The Government approved the Proprosla of the Law which is now in Parliamentary procedure. Inputs were not accepted with the explanation that the act was already in the process of being submitted to the Government of Montenegro, making further alignment unlikely.

5. Memet Memeti

Contract 1: International Consultant to develop comparative analyses of gender machinery in Montenegro and Western Balkans region

Contract 2: Gender Expert for supporting the process of reform for the institutional set up of gender machinery in Montenegro.

Mr Memeti was engaged to develop a comparative analysis of the institutional framework for gender equality in Montenegro and across the Western Balkans. Originally, Ms. Visnja Bacanovic was engaged for this position, but had to resign due to getting engaged with UNWomen in the meantime. In the competitive process, Mr Memeti was a close second candidate and thus continued work on this position.

This work included mapping the existing gender machinery in Montenegro, identifying institutional strengths and limitations, and benchmarking against regional examples. The consultant formulated a set of evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and coherence of national structures responsible for gender equality. These recommendations serve as a foundation for further reforms and interventions within the national gender equality system.

Mr Memeti provides technical support for the reform of Montenegro's institutional setup for gender equality. This includes a comprehensive review of existing legislation, policies, assessments, and recommendations, with a focus on identifying structural gaps and ensuring compliance with international obligations such as CEDAW and SDG 5. The expert supports stakeholder consultations involving government institutions, civil society, and international partners to gather feedback and promote institutional ownership. Additionally, the expert contributed to the drafting of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and is to support the process of development of the new Law on Gender Equality, including the development of clear objectives, indicators, and supporting materials for decision-makers.

Deliverables:

- Comparative Analysis on WB gender mechanisms
- Inputs for situational analysis for National Gender Equality Strategy
- Initial inputs for new Law on Gender Equality based on comparative analysis

6. Željko Vukčević**Consultant to support Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration**

Mr. Zeljko Vukcevic is deployed to the Ministry of Public Administration to support the integration of gender equality into the public administration reform agenda. His responsibilities include coordinating the implementation of gender-responsive policies within the Ministry, but as well as across the public administration and developing inputs that align with broader national strategies. He collaborates closely with senior management and relevant stakeholders across the administration to promote a harmonized and institutionalized approach to gender equality. His work also focuses on identifying intersections between gender equality, human rights protection, and the EU integration process, ensuring that public administration reform efforts contribute to wider national and international commitments.

Delivearbles:

- Methodology for development of Gender Action plans for public institutions (draft) - deriving from PAR strategy
- Gender Action Plan for Ministry of Public Administration (draft) - deriving from PAR strategy
- Gender Action plans for ministry of Human Rights and Minorities; - deriving from PAR strategy (under development; expected to be developed by the end of June)
- Methodology for gender mainstreaming of laws – with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Secretariat General – (under development; expected to be developed and adopted by September)
- Gender mainstreaming of RIA methodology – under developemnt (expected to be completed at the end of July)
- Supported developemt and delivery of training of delivery sessions for various public administration institutions

7. Marko Savić**Consultant to support Gender Mainstreaming in sectoral policies aligned with the EU accession process**

Mr. Savić's responsibilities are a continuation of the previous work done by Ms. Jonica, with several adjustments. Mr. Marko Savić's engagement represents a continuation of gender mainstreaming efforts initiated within the Ministry of European Affairs. His focus is on

strengthening the integration of gender perspectives across the legal and policy framework, particularly in the context of public administration reform and EU sectoral policies. Mr. Savić provides recommendations for enhancing gender responsiveness within EU integration clusters and supports institutional capacity building in gender-sensitive policymaking and strategic planning.

Deliverables:

- Action plan for gender equality for Ministry of European Affairs – deriving from PAR
- Analysis on trends regarding feminist foreign policy to inform new Strategy of Foreign affairs
- Gender mainstreaming of RIA methodology – under development (expected to be completed at the end of July)
- Supported development of training sessions for the upcoming capacity development of RIA officers

8. Branka Žigante Mašić

International Consultant to Provide Expert Inputs for Legislative and System Reform Addressing Gender-Based Violence

Ms. Branka Žigante Mašić is an international consultant with expertise in gender-based violence (GBV), engaged to support legislative reform and capacity development in this area. She has contributed to the drafting and revision of legal frameworks addressing GBV and developed expert inputs for systemic improvements. Her responsibilities include supporting the capacity development of institutions and professionals involved in GBV prevention and response, as well as contributing to awareness-raising efforts to promote public and institutional understanding of the issue. Her work supports the creation of a more coherent and effective response to GBV in Montenegro.

Deliverables:

- **Criminal code** – Inputs developed and shared with Head of Working group. Expert discussion organized with relevant stakeholders to discuss comprehensive and efficient definition of femicide. Working group is still ongoing. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.
- **Law on Misdemeanors** – Inputs developed and shared with the Head of Working group, which work is still ongoing. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the third quarter of 2025.
- Supported development and delivery of training for Supreme State Prosecution.
- **Law on Protection from Domestic Violence** – Preparation of inputs is in progress. According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the adoption of the Law is planned for the third quarter of 2025.

9. Nina Radović-Sentić

Legal Expert for drafting gender equality legislation

Ms. Nina Radovic-Sentic is involved in the development of Montenegro's key normative frameworks on gender equality, including the National Gender Equality Strategy 2025–2029 and the new Law on Gender Equality, along with supporting bylaws. She provides expert support to the working groups responsible for drafting both documents and ensures their alignment with national policy and legal frameworks, as well as international standards. Her tasks include the preparation of technical inputs, formulation of recommendations, and coordination across sectors to ensure a consistent and actionable approach to gender equality. Her contribution supports the development of a comprehensive and operational legal and strategic foundation for the promotion of gender equality.

Deliverables:

- **Law on Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms** – Inputs developed and shared with Head of Working group. 6 out of 8 inputs were accepted.
- **Gender Equality Law** – providing legal support (in progress). According to the Government's Midterm Work Plan, the Law is scheduled for adoption in the first quarter of 2026.

10. Gordana Radojević

Consultant to support the creation of a one-stop shop repository of statistical data on women in Montenegro

Ms. Gordana Radojević is engaged in developing a centralized, one-stop data repository on gender equality in Montenegro, aimed at improving access to reliable and comprehensive gender-related data adjusted for Digital Gender Equality Platform. These resources are intended to support evidence-based policymaking and to strengthen the analytical foundation for gender equality initiatives. Her work contributes to the creation of a knowledge base that supports more effective planning, monitoring, and accountability.

Deliverables:

- Statistical overview of the data related to women in Montenegro to be used for Digital Gender Equality Platform and video format
- Developed and delivered training session for ToT participants related to sex disaggregated data and its usage in gender analysis.

