



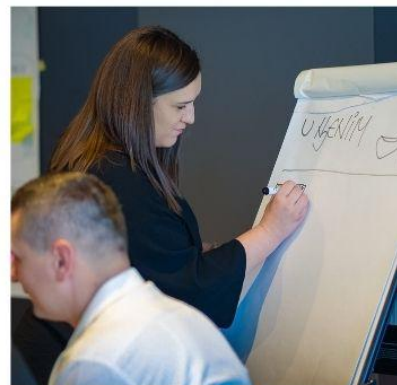
CRNA GORA
UPRAVA ZA LJUDSKE RESURSE



PROGRESS REPORT

ENGAGEMENT FACILITY
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR
GENDER EQUALITY
MAY 2024-SEP-2025

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Executive summary

Since its initiation, the initiative “*Capacity Development of Human Resource Management Authority*” has advanced the institutional capacities for integrating gender equality principles of the Human Resource Management Authority (HRMA) in Montenegro and created grounds for more ambitious transformation of the institution and its contribution to the broader public administration reform within the EU integration process.

Through a combination of strategic planning, targeted trainings and capacity development, technical support for legal, policy and institutional gender mainstreaming, and knowledge generation and sharing, the initiative has created momentum for embedding gender equality into the systemic framework of HRMA and beyond.

Key achievements include:

- **Strategic planning and evidence base established:** A co-designed roadmap and the participation in the *Gender Equality Perception and Attitude Assessment* (the most extensive in Montenegro) provided robust data and informed the **HRMA Gender Roadmap 2025–2030** for systemic gender mainstreaming.
- **Gender architecture institutionalized:** HRMA established a three-tier structure (Core, Operational, and Cross-Institutional Teams) ensuring cross-sectoral coordination within HRMA and cross-institutional cooperation with partner institutions.
- **Pool of gender trainers and experts strengthened:** The accredited **Training of Trainers (ToT) programme** engaged 42 participants from government, academia, and civil society, creating a sustainable mechanism for continuous capacity development and embedding expertise across sectors.
- **Enabling environment strengthened:** Inputs to amendments of the **Law on Civil Servants and Deputies** secured new parental protections and anti-discrimination safeguards, while awareness initiatives positioned HRMA as a champion of safe, inclusive, and rights-based workplace.
- **Partnerships leveraged for systemic impact:** Synergies with UNDP and cross-institutional collaboration positioned HRMA as a **national leader and convener** on gender-responsive governance.

Project objectives

The **overall objective** the Engagement Facility is to support capacity development of Human Resource Management Authority, with two key activities:

Activity 1: Tailor made trainings for HRMA

This activity aims to strengthen HRMA staff’s expertise in gender mainstreaming, in line with the 2030 Agenda. It seeks to build strategic skills in planning, resource allocation, monitoring, and evaluation in order to ensure that gender equality is embedded across HRMA’s policies and practices. It also aims to promote inclusive institutional frameworks, foster human rights-based work environments, and reinforce accountability throughout the policy cycle, advancing HRMA’s commitment to gender equality and the SDGs.

Activity 2: Organization of regional event

This activity aims to provide a regional platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange on gender mainstreaming in public administration. It seeks to facilitate the sharing of best practices and experiences, while leveraging existing initiatives to drive meaningful progress in the region.

Results and progress

1. Planning and Management for Gender Equality

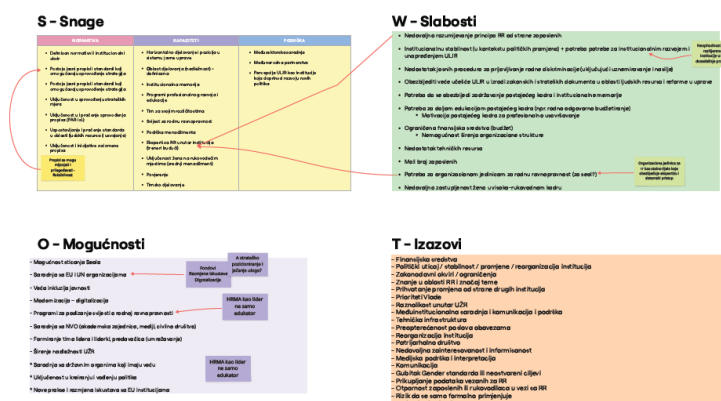
From the very outset, the project prioritized joint planning and co-design of project strategy with HRMA. An inception meeting was held on 5 June 2024 to agree on the methodology, scope, and sequencing of interventions. This co-design approach proved critical: it ensured that the project's interventions were not only responsive to HRMA's institutional needs but also strategically aligned with broader public administration reforms. The outcome was a project implementation plan, jointly owned by HRMA and UNDP, that brought together training, evidence generation, strategic planning, and legal reform inputs into a coherent and sequenced framework. This early investment in participatory planning laid a solid foundation for future work in all segments as detailed below.

A key milestone in evidence-based planning was the Gender Equality Perception and Attitude Assessment. Conducted in close synergy between projects *"Capacity Development of Human Resource Management Authority"* and EU-funded *"United in Gender Equality"*, this assessment became the most extensive exercise of its kind in Montenegro, encompassing HRMA itself, all ministries, the Parliament, and selected municipalities. Through a rigorous mixed-method approach, the assessment captured civil servants' knowledge, perceptions, and practices regarding gender equality. The methodology was carefully designed to identify and analyse both institution-specific trends, for instance of HRMA and broader systemic patterns across public administration.

The initial findings were critical as they highlighted gaps in awareness and understanding of gender equality principles, uneven understanding of legal and policy frameworks, and limited use of gender mainstreaming tools by civil servants. These insights provided HRMA with a robust evidence base for designing its strategic roadmap on gender equality and for tailoring future interventions to address concrete needs.

Building on this evidence, the project further reinforced the planning dimension in 2025 through two strategic workshops with HRMA's senior management and a dedicated internal gender mainstreaming core team. These workshops, supported through technical expertise of UNDP, introduced tools for institutional gender analysis, including a participatory SWOT assessment, and facilitated structured reflection on HRMA's long-term vision for institution with gender equality lenses. The process culminated in the development of the HRMA Roadmap 2025–2030, a forward-looking framework that ensures gender equality is not treated as an ad hoc activity but as an integral part of HRMA's strategic outlook and institutional plan.





assessment, enabling members to systematically identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks related to gender equality within HRMA.

The second training/workshop built on these results and expanded participation to include key partners from the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of European Affairs. This collaborative exercise fostered cross-sectoral exchange of knowledge between HRMA units and external partners, and contributed directly to the development of HRMA's strategic vision. Through this process, participants collectively identified institutional challenges and opportunities, and defined clear pathways for mainstreaming gender equality across all areas of HRMA's mandate.



The most significant step in strengthening gender capacities within HRMA and beyond in public administration was the launch of the [Training of Trainers \(ToT\) programme](#) in February 2025. This initiative represents one of the project's most strategic achievements. A national public call attracted over 70 applications—the highest response ever for an HRMA-organized ToT. Following a transparent selection process, 42 participants were chosen, representing expertise from public administration, academia, and civil society, including three from HRMA. This wide participation ensured that the programme built a multi-sectoral pool of expertise capable of advancing gender equality across



diverse sectors of governance.

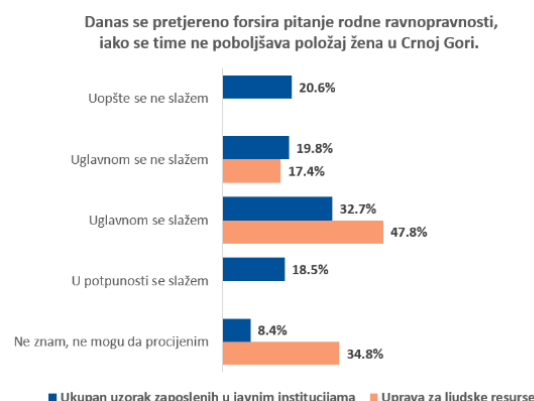
Between March and July 2025, 18 participants - including three HRMA staff - completed [five intensive training modules in Budva, Petrovac, and Ulcinj](#). All participants passed written assessments, with practical exams scheduled for October 2025. A [second cohort](#) was launched in September 2025 to run until November. UNDP simultaneously provided expert input to update and refine the training methodology and materials, ensuring alignment with international standards and changes in legislative and institutional frameworks.

The updated ToT programme now stands as a sustainable national mechanism for continuously generating trainers on gender equality. Graduates are not only able to deliver standardized trainings across government institutions, but also act as embedded gender equality experts, influencing policies, programmes, and reforms. For HRMA specifically, three staff members who completed the programme are now positioned to advance gender mainstreaming across its core functions and internal processes, ensuring systemic integration of gender equality.

3. Enabling Work Environments

Creating enabling institutional environments was pursued through both evidence generation and practical reforms.

The **Perception and Attitude Assessment** provided HRMA with a mirror of its internal enabling environment, mapping staff awareness, practices, and institutional knowledge and capacities. By identifying gaps in the attitudes, prevalence of stereotypes, understanding of gender issues, manifestations of discrimination, existence of mechanisms to address discrimination and prevention, availability and use of gender mainstreaming tools, the assessment provided HRMA with a roadmap to improve workplace culture and institutional performance.



Moreover, the project contributed to legal and policy reform in the area of enabling environment. In 2025, HRMA and UNDP provided recommendations to amendments of the Law on Civil Servants and Deputies. Key proposals included ensuring gender balance in recruitment and leadership, enhanced protections for maternity and parental leave, stronger anti-discrimination safeguards, and mandatory gender training for civil servants. Although not all recommendations were adopted, critical provisions on parental protections and anti-discrimination were integrated into the final amendments. These represent structural improvements to the legal framework, ensuring more equitable working conditions across the public administration, including HRMA.

The project supported institutional culture change and awareness raising. As part of HRMA's 20th anniversary celebrations in 2024, the HRMA organized a public panel discussion, "Words Have Power: Combating Hate Speech, Sexism, and Misogyny," alongside a dedicated training on "Gender-Based Hate Speech, Sexism, and Misogyny," hosted at Montenegro's Science and Technology Park. Although not directly implemented under the project, through UNDP's participation in the panel discussion the platform was used to communicate HRMA's role as a champion for equality and to visibly raise awareness of the importance of creating safe, respectful work environments. In addition, in the scope of the same celebration, UNDP supported HRMA to produce a video featuring gender champions was produced and presented at a high-level event on 31 October 2024. This sent a strong signal of HRMA's institutional commitment, both internally and publicly, contributing to an organizational culture that respects human rights and equity.

4. Partnerships for Gender Equality

Partnerships were a defining feature of the project, both in evidence generation and in advancing systemic reform. From the outset, the project built on a strong partnership with UNDP, which created synergies with several wider initiatives implemented by UNDP, most notably the EU-funded *United in Gender Equality* project. Through this strategy and synergy, the project successfully achieved:

- The Gender Equality Perception and Attitude Assessment—the most extensive of its kind in Montenegro, spanning HRMA, ministries, Parliament, and municipalities.
- The [Dialogue on Gender Equality and Public Administration](#) (6 December 2024), which convened government, academia, civil society, and international partners. By linking assessment findings with high-level policy discussions, the dialogue created a bridge between evidence and action while reinforcing HRMA's role as a credible driver of change.
- The [ToT programme](#), which enabled organization and execution of 5 moduls in two cohorts, and engagement of participants from public administration, academia, and civil society to create a multi-sectoral cadre of experts equipped to advance gender equality across governance systems



Moreover, partnerships were formalized through the creation of a cross-institutional team for gender mainstreaming, which brought together representatives from HRMA, other line ministries, oversight bodies, and the Cabinet of the Prime Minister. This structure has positioned HRMA not only as a leader within its own institution but also as a frontrunner among the wider governance and public administration when it comes to gender mainstreaming.

Furthermore, the project strategically engaged the Ministry of Public Administration and the Ministry of European Affairs as partners in the institutional training and workshop process in 2025. Their active participation ensured that HRMA's internal capacity-building efforts were directly connected to broader governance reforms and Montenegro's EU integration priorities.

Taken together, these partnerships ensured that project impact was not confined within a single institution but that it echoes across governance systems, legal frameworks, and policy processes. They also reinforced HRMA's position as a convenor, capable of conveying national stakeholders, international partners, and civil society behind a shared reform agenda.

5. Results and Impacts of Public Policies

The project has generated tangible, systemic impacts on public policies in Montenegro, advocating that gender equality is not treated as a parallel agenda but as a core principle of democratic governance and EU integration.

A key achievement was the project's technical contribution to the amendments of the Law on Civil Servants and Deputies, where critical gender-responsive provisions were successfully integrated. These amendments enhanced parental protections, and reinforced safeguards against discrimination—directly improving the working lives of civil servants while embedding equality standards into Montenegro's public administration framework.

In terms of advocacy and accountability, HRMA used high-level moments—including its 20th anniversary celebrations and the UNDP's Dialogue on Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration—to advocate for stronger institutional commitment to gender equality. These platforms showcased HRMA's effort into a model institution, sending a broader signal on the need for public administration-wide reforms grounded in gender-responsiveness, inclusiveness, and fairness.

Systemic transformation and sustainability has been reinforced through the creation of a pool of experienced trainers on gender equality, established under the accredited Training of Trainers (ToT) programme. This cadre represents not only a mechanism for continuous, high-quality capacity development but also a resource of embedded expertise that can shape policies, advise on institutional practices, and extend influence well beyond training delivery.

HRMA's own transformation was further leveraged into policy innovation: its example was used to develop a Methodology for Gender Equality Action Plans in Public Administration, designed by UNDP and now prepared for government-wide adoption. This methodology will enable institutions across Montenegro to systematically plan, implement, and monitor gender equality measures, thereby scaling impact nationally.

Finally, the findings of the Perception and Attitude Assessment will serve as a strategic evidence base for future transformation. As the results are disseminated and systematically integrated into HRMA's services—particularly in employment policies and capacity development programmes—they are expected to drive systemic transformation across public administration, ensuring that reforms are firmly grounded in the lived realities and needs of civil servants.

Conclusion

Taken together, the achievements of this first year demonstrate how even a modest initiative in terms of resources can generate impact when strategically designed and anchored in strong partnerships. By leveraging technical support and synergies with larger UNDP-led programmes, aligning with national reform agendas, the project transformed limited resources into a catalyst for wider change.

Taken together, the results achieved provide HRMA with strong grounds and credibility to lead on gender-responsive transformation. With the foundations now firmly in place, the focus can shift towards more substantive, large-scale interventions that build on this momentum and drive systemic change across Montenegro's public administration.

Way Forward - Building an exemplary model

Montenegro's HRMA has laid strong foundations for embedding gender equality across public administration. The next step is to finalize incorporation of systemic standards for gender equality, obtain official certification, and position HRMA as a regional beacon of inclusive, accountable, and gender-responsive governance. Guided by the UNDP Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions, this journey will not only strengthen HRMA's institutional capacity but also inspire replication of best practices across the Western Balkans and beyond.

1. Consolidate and Scale Institutional Gender Architecture

- Sustain and further empower the three-tiered gender structure (Core gender expertise, Sector related and Cross-Sectoral Teams).
- Ensure that a dedicated gender expert is on board and fully integrated into HRMA's decision-making, performance systems, and monitoring processes.
- Expand cross-governmental cooperation to initiate institutionalization of gender-responsive practices across ministries, local governments, and oversight bodies.

2. Advance HRMA as a Knowledge and Training Hub

- Institutionalize the Training of Trainers (ToT) programme as a permanent national mechanism revisiting maintenance of highest standards in knowledge sharing.
- Develop a (re)certification system for gender equality trainers in public service.
- Position HRMA as a regional center of excellence, sharing knowledge and tools with WB6 public administration HR bodies/academies.

3. Strengthen Enabling Work Environments and Promotion of HRMA Results

- Build on perception and attitude assessment findings to design institutional culture change programmes.
- Launch regular campaigns to combat gender stereotypes, harassment, and discrimination within public service.
- Support the development of public campaigns that promote HRM and gender equality principles in the workplace.
- Mainstream gender equality into HRMA's strategic and communication plans.
- Present gender-responsive HR policies (flexible work, parental leave schemes, inclusive recruitment) to targeted audiences as models for wider adoption.
- Promote HRMA as a champion of safe, inclusive, and rights-based workplaces, inspiring transformation across the administration.

4. Leverage Partnerships for Regional Leadership

- Use HRMA's convening power to lead regional dialogues on inclusive public administration.
- Foster WB6 cooperation by documenting HRMA's practices as replicable models for the WB and beyond.
- Align initiatives with EU integration and the SDGs, positioning Montenegro as a frontrunner in gender-responsive governance reforms.

5. Monitoring, Accountability, and Recognition

- Formally adopt a Gender Equality Action Plan for HRMA.
- Introduce annual reporting on gender equality performance within HRMA and expand this practice across the public sector.
- Pursue international recognition through the UNDP Gender Equality Seal, reinforcing Montenegro's leadership role.
- Publicly promote HRMA's Gender Equality Seal as a symbol of progress and commitment.

Budget and expenditure

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES	BUDGET USD	EXPENDITURES USD	COMMITMENTS USD
Capacity Development of Human Resources Management Authority	Specialised Trainings	35,716.63	24,335.56	10,000.00
	Technical assistance for Public Seal / technical advisor	16,322.00	16,225.19	
Total output without GMS		52,038.63	40,560.75	10,000.00
GMS 3%		1,609.44	1,537.51	300.00
TOTAL		53,648.07	42,098.26	10,300.00