

EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO MONTENEGRO

The Head of Delegation

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2027

Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP (revision of 2025)

MONTENEGRO

1. Context for EU action on gender equality and women's empowerment in Montenegro

The **legislative framework** for gender equality in Montenegro is in place, with international agreements and generally accepted standards of international law mostly integrated into the national laws. Certain aspects of relevant EU *acquis* still need to be addressed, however. In the context of the EU accession process, Montenegro is currently in an intense period of harmonisation with the EU *acquis*, which has seen various upgrades in the area of gender equality recently. Thus, several laws relevant for gender equality are currently pending amendments and adoption in the forthcoming period. This is the case for example for the *Gender Equality Law, the Law on Protection of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination, the Criminal Procedure Code and the draft Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of Montenegro*.

The ongoing strengthening of the legal framework needs to be matched by an **increased focus on implementation and enforcement**. Already prior to the strengthened framework, there were gaps in this regard, and it is the view of the EUD that in the coming years, EU support should focus both on tackling outstanding gaps, and on supporting measures needed to comply with new legislation.

Women continue to face multiple forms of **discrimination** in Montenegrin society. Harmful gender norms that affect the position of women in society have been recently addressed by several reports, such as the UN Human rights Committee (March 2025), CEDAW (June 2024) and CoE GREVIO (November 2024). The 2024 CEDAW recommendations remain to be addressed. Discriminatory practices, as reflected and perpetuated for example by a relatively high number of sex-selective abortions (demonstrating the prevalence of son preference in family and within society) and strong societal pressure on women to refuse real estate inheritance to the benefit of male family members, are pointed out by CEDAW and Human Rights Committee.

Due to the rise of hate speech, especially online, CEDAW recommends ensuring protection from gender-based hate speech, by criminalising sexist and misogynist hate speech, including online, which primarily targets Roma women, transgender women and women politicians. Women with disabilities, rural women, Roma and trans women, face multiple forms of discrimination, which calls for more targeted approaches in the design of policies and legislation in different sectors.

At the EU level, a comprehensive framework to effectively prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence is provided in the *Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024*. The Directive reinforces and introduces measures in the following key areas: the definition of relevant criminal offences and penalties, victim protection and access to justice, victim support services, improved data collection, prevention strategies, and enhanced coordination and cooperation. It also tackles cyber-violence, making the most common forms of online abuse a criminal offence in every Member State. Montenegrin legislation will have to be aligned with this Directive.

The *Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex* has been in force since 2021, but a number of other laws necessary for its implementation have still not been aligned with the law, which means that in practice no such partnerships are registered. One of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee of March 2025 is to reinforce the legal framework to promote the equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, notably by adopting the draft Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on Self Determination, ensuring it clearly prohibits forced medical sterilization or other inhumane medical procedures. The Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on Self-Determination has been drafted, including such measures, but its adoption is pending since 2024.

There is a general **trend of re-traditionalisation of society, promoting the role of women in the domestic sphere**. The findings of the UNDP *Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Authorities*¹, funded by the EU under the “United in

¹ UNDP's Research on Gender Equality in Montenegro and Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration, 2024
<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/>

Gender Equality” project, show perceptions that are in line with traditional gender roles. About 60% of citizens believe that it is preferable for a man to work and for a woman to dedicate herself to the family for the benefit of children, and this attitude is even more common among men. Every second citizen believes that successful women professionals inevitably neglect their families. The perception still lingers that women entering the public sphere is only acceptable if it doesn’t interfere with their “primary” role related to motherhood and family responsibilities. The majority of young people in Montenegro believe that men and women shouldn’t share household tasks, arguing that gender roles should be distinct as women are primarily devoted to managing the home. Only every tenth man in Montenegro actively participates in household duties daily.

Gender-based violence is pervasive, affecting women from all spheres of life. Societal attitudes remain troubling: one-third of citizens believe that women fabricate claims of psychological abuse for attention. Accountability is minimal, with only 10% of convictions for violence resulting in prison sentences. National legislation is in place but is still not fully aligned with the EU *acquis*, in particular the Victims’ Rights Directive. Measures for victim protection during criminal proceedings, such as restraining and eviction orders and other measures that are available in misdemeanour proceedings ought to be included in the *Criminal Procedure Code*. The national legislation also needs to be further aligned with the Istanbul Convention and the *EU Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence*. The amendments to the *Law on protection from domestic violence* are pending. Amendments of the *Criminal Law of Montenegro* adopted in December 2023, resulted in better definition of misdemeanour and criminal acts when it comes to violence in family or family community. Psychological violence is also taken into consideration, in addition to physical violence, and a new definition of family has been introduced, including current and former unmarried partners, as well as same sex partners. Both, the amended Criminal Procedure Code and Criminal Code of Montenegro are pending adoption as part of EU accession negotiations under chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights.

Montenegro’s cross-institutional Operational Team for the fight against family and gender-based violence is active, providing recommendations for the improvement of policies and institutional practice to align with the Istanbul Convention and the *EU Directive 2024/1385*. The Operational Team is composed of the representatives of different Government institutions, the prosecution, judiciary and civil society. In June 2025, Council of Europe assisted in assessing the implementation of the Protocol on prevention and protection from gender-based violence and family violence. The assessment concluded that the Protocol should apply not only to domestic violence but also to other forms of violence against women, and that it should include provisions detailing the measures that institutions/organizations should implement in these cases. The Protocol should also be better harmonised with international standards and have provisions explaining psychological and economic violence, as they are often overlooked and/or given marginal importance by institutions and judiciary. All measures should be “victim-centred” and based on trauma-informed approach. There should be provisions for paying special attention and applying a culturally-sensitive intersectional approach when working with victims who are, or may be, exposed to intersectional discrimination (such as Roma and other ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, refugees, women from rural areas, LBTI women, women in prostitution, etc.).

In October 2024, the Supreme State Prosecutor put in place new Binding Instructions for the handling of sexual and gender-based violence cases, in line with the amended *Criminal Code of Montenegro*, relevant articles of the Istanbul Convention, as well as of the *EU Directive of Victim Protection*. Monitoring shows that the Guidelines are already providing positive results when it comes to handling and qualification of gender-based violence cases by the prosecution. For example, in 2024, 28% of domestic violence cases were prosecuted as a criminal offense, compared to 10%-16% in the period 2019-2023. The Supreme Court recently adopted Guidelines for the handling of such cases.

The December 2024 government report on the implementation of the National Plan for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention raised among other things the following findings: Even

though the Government increased the support for shelter services for children, adults, and elderly victims of abuse, neglect, gender-based violence and domestic violence from EUR 300,000 in 2024 to EUR 500,000 in 2025, further funding is needed to ensure adequate and sustainable financing of specialised services for women victims of violence. Robust data collection and analysis among different institutions and coordinated policy implementation is needed. Action is also urgently required in relation to general preventive measures and training of professionals. Furthermore, psycho-social treatment programmes for perpetrators of violence are needed. The country also lacks crisis centres and clear procedures to address sexual violence, leaving survivors without adequate support. The data collection point is being somewhat addressed by efforts to ensure that police and social centres make more consistent use of the Unique Database for reporting on gender-based violence, by purchasing the new software and training of the professionals. Under its Reform Agenda adopted in 2024, Montenegro also committed to put in place three crisis centres for the victims of sexual violence, which did not exist before and which will offer clear procedures and support to victims.

Political participation of women could improve following the latest changes in electoral legislation in July 2025. This increased the quota for the underrepresented gender on electoral lists to 40%, and provided that for every three candidates there must be one candidate of the underrepresented gender. However, this is still not in line with the CEDAW recommendations on gender parity on electoral lists, that is 50-50. It should also be noted that there were already continuous failures to enforce the previous 30% quota during the local elections in 2022, eleven years after their adoption. The electoral lists of those elections did not meet the required quota, but were adopted nevertheless. The 44th Montenegrin Government still has the lowest percentage of women ministers since 2012 (26%). In the current Parliament, out of 81 MPs in total, only 17 are women. This represents a slight decrease from the previous convocation when there were 18 women MPs. A significant issue is also the non-transparent expenditure of funds allocated to women's organisations within political parties, which has also been raised by the State Audit Institution: funds allocated to the work of women clubs for their work is instead channelled to other activities, in breach of the provisions of the Law on Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns. Thus, concrete measures are needed to ensure that the commitments become reality. Among issues to address are rising hate speech, misogynist rhetoric and online violence against women, which act as important disincentives for women's participation in public life.

Women also remain under-represented in **management positions in public administration and public enterprises**. Their presence is growing in lower decision-making positions, but especially in positions with limited influence on decision-making. Gender mainstreaming, coordination and interoperability among public authorities must be maximised both at national and municipal levels. The EU-funded "Assessment of practices: *Integration of Gender Equality principles in Public Administration*", conducted by UNDP indicates political will to advance gender equality at a declarative level, but not reflected in sectoral policies. A gender perspective is rarely applied in the drafting of new laws, as institutions are not obligated to conduct gender analysis, leading to inconsistent application of gender equality principles across sectors. Whilst the *Law on Gender Equality* already requires gender analysis in legislation, there is no mandatory oversight of this requirement, which allows laws to be adopted without active consideration of their impact on women and men. Institutions are not held accountable for failing to implement gender policies—no sanction system is in place. Lack of sex-disaggregated data limits the analysis of gender equality measures.

Within the EU-funded "United in Gender Equality" project, 25 laws, strategies, and policy frameworks have been gender mainstreamed, among which the *Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament* (with increased quota to 40%), *Strategy on Social and Child Protection*, *Strategy on Deinstitutionalization*, *Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy*, *National Gender Equality Strategy*, *the Agricultural Census Law*, *Law on Equality Protection and Prohibition of Discrimination* etc. Whilst these are encouraging steps, it is important to ensure that Montenegro's institutions themselves ensure such continued efforts. A relevant step could be ensured under the new *Law on Gender Equality*, which is under preparation and could include penalties for failing to perform gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in policies and legislation.

The **national gender equality mechanism**, expected to pursue improvements in the various policy failures explained above, is still very thinly staffed and not adequately mandated. The new draft *Gender Equality Law* can be a positive step forward, when adopted, by addressing all these matters - reiterating the obligation of gender mainstreaming of policies, and introducing penalties for non-compliance, among other provisions. However, in order to effectively apply the regulatory framework governing gender equality, it is essential to ensure that the mechanism is given political priority, expressed as a clear oversight role, and sufficient human and financial resources, combined with regular oversight by the PMs office. It can be noted that the work programme of the 44th government, refers to gender only once, in relation to fighting gender-based violence, but makes no direct reference to gender equality or mainstreaming.

The Government of Montenegro has laid a sound legislative foundation for the successful integration of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in the national PFM system. However, there are still gaps in the legislative framework, rendering the implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy and budget an optional activity, rather than a mandatory requirement. In particular, the current Law on Budget and Fiscal Responsibility does not include the mandatory use of GRB. Programme budgeting is still in the early stages of implementation, which is affecting the successful use of GRB and there is a considerable gap in the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in governmental institutions.²

In **employment**, women face significant barriers, including a gender pay gap, limited access to leadership positions, and the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. Women's labour force participation remains lower than men's, especially in rural areas. Traditional gender roles continue to shape occupational choices, with women underrepresented in high-paying industries and overrepresented in lower-paying, precarious jobs. Gender based stereotypical preconceptions about childcare and household work being a woman's responsibility persist. There are not enough and affordable kindergartens and early childhood education and care (ECEC) facilities throughout the country in order to enable parents to participate in the labour market. Montenegro included a commitment to increase availability of quality childcare throughout the country with 1,800 new places in kindergartens under its Reform Agenda. The new Law on social and child protection should implement tax benefit systems so that both parents have similar financial incentives to work. Montenegro should start initial steps to align with the EU Pay Transparency Directive.

Montenegro is broadly aligned with the *acquis* on gender equality in the area of employment and social policy. However, according to the latest estimate, the gender pay gap in Montenegro is around 20 percent (2021). Out of the total number of full-time employed persons, 54.7% are men, and 45.3% women. The biggest share of women is in Wholesale and Retail, Education and Health, and Social Work. Although the majority of employees in these areas are women, only a fraction of them reaches decision-making positions. Furthermore, women make up only 24.8% (35.9% in 2021) of legislators, senior officials and managers compared to 75.2% of men (64.1%). The above-mentioned UNDP Research on Gender Equality shows the lack of knowledge about basic labour rights among citizens. Every second citizen believes that the employer has the legal right to request from female job candidates a certificate that they are not pregnant. Measures for elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace and discriminatory gender wage are not well developed.

Amendments to the *Law on Prohibition of Discrimination* were adopted by Montenegrin authorities in July 2025 and is pending the adoption by the Parliament. The amendments aim to align the Law with Council Directive 2000/78/EC, laying down a general framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation as regards employment and occupation; and with *Council Directive 2006/54/EC*, which aims to ensure the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, such as: access to employment, including promotion, and to vocational training; working conditions, including pay; occupational social security schemes. Amendments to the *Labour Law* are being

² <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/11/state-of-play-of-gender-responsive-budgeting-in-montenegro-overview-of-key-achievements-gaps-and-ways-forward>

reviewed by the European Commission and are pending adoption. They will ensure harmonisation with the *Directive on work-life balance* for parents and carers, on transparent and predictable working conditions as well as with the EU Framework Agreement on Telework.

Gender inequality is larger in the area of **access to financial resources** than in the general economic situation of women and men³. Women are owners of 21.8% of SMEs in Montenegro, and data on women in management boards is not yet available. The Montenegro enterprise survey (World Bank 2020) shows that there is a gender gap in female participation in top management and in firm ownership. The Enterprise survey also shows excessive reliance on internal funds (71% of firms have used this source of firms financing) indicating potentially inefficient financial intermediation. Firms that are managed by women identify in greater percentage access to finance as a major constraint to them doing business than firms that are managed by men (13.3%, as compared to 9.9% of firms managed by men).⁴ The biggest inequality remains to be observed in the area of property ownership where women are owners of only 4% of houses and 8% of land, although in terms of weekend houses this percentage is higher (14% of weekend houses are owned by women). The reasons for this have not been researched.⁵

The biggest inequality between women and men remains in the area of **property ownership**. In April 2023, OSCE and DEFACTO consultancy conducted a survey⁶ which showed that women make up slightly more than one third of all registered property owners in Montenegro, or 36%. The survey also demonstrates that women most often acquire property through purchase, or 40%. These findings reveal deep rooted patriarchal tradition in Montenegro, where inheritance in majority of cases is passed to male members of the family, especially land and property.

There are also some positive developments when it comes to **representation of women in management positions**. The new *Law on Companies* was adopted in July 2025 and is fully aligned with EC Directive 2022/2381 and stipulates that 40% of the total number of non-executive directors on the board of directors, or 40% of the members of the supervisory board, come from the underrepresented gender. Moreover, penalties are envisaged as well for non-compliance with the above-mentioned provision.

The Women's Business Trademark initiative was launched in January 2024 by the Secretariat of the Competitiveness Council and with the support of the EBRD and the Government of the United Kingdom. It recognises "women's businesses" whose main characteristic is that women not only have formal legal ownership but also play a substantive managerial role, meaning women make decisions within companies and actively participate in the economy. It also aims to facilitate access to financial and non-financial incentives for women entrepreneurs by enabling public and private institutions to have a system for recognizing women's businesses. A publicly available registry of TRADEMARK holders has been established and over 230 TRADEMARKs issued so far, which an important step toward advancing gender equality through the economic empowerment of women.

The current Programme for Improving Competitiveness of Economy by the Ministry of Economic Development shows promising results, since for the first time since its start several years ago there were not enough funds in 2025 to meet the demand under the women's entrepreneurship support schemes.

The Women Entrepreneurs (WE) Finance Code initiative in Montenegro was launched to empower women economically and improve the availability of financing sources for women-owned or managed businesses. It is an initiative through which financial service providers, regulators, development banks, and other financial ecosystem actors collaborate to support financing MSMEs owned or managed by women more substantially. Montenegro became one of the 14 pilot countries involved in this project.

Consultations

⁶ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/a/547832_0.pdf

This revised Country-Level Implementation Plan for Montenegro is based on a series of consultations undertaken by EUDEL in 2025 with EU Member States, International Organisations, and national civil society organisations (CSOs). The challenge faced by national policy makers in addressing gender gaps and inequalities in Montenegro has been characterised as being mostly related to:

- the complexity and inter-connectedness of the scope and range of policy intervention
- the lack of inter-institutional coordination
- the lack of coherence and enforcement of the legal/regulatory framework in all sectors
- the gap of gender disaggregated statistics to support evidence-based policy making
- the inherent and pervasive structural inequalities in Montenegrin society which remains patriarchal, with strong impact of customary norms and stereotypes.

Among EU Member States, there is a broad range of experience and lessons drawing from approaches to gender issues. Gender budgeting has emerged as one of the critical pillars of efforts to assess budgetary impacts on women and girls and to advance gender equality in Montenegro (fiscal policies; accountability systems for public spending on gender-focused initiatives; incorporating relevant line ministries into gender budgeting processes and institutionalising tools such as gender budget statements and reviews; and incorporating gender budgeting at the level of sub-national entities). The collection and dissemination of robust and consistent sex-disaggregated economic and social data to inform and support evidence-based policy making has also been identified as a significant challenge. Collaboration with civil society must be performed early enough in the policy making and legislative cycle to influence policy design, identify evidence of potential gender-blindness and undesirable impacts of policies/laws on gender equality, and contribute to increase accountability and quality governance. Stakeholders highlighted the crucial importance of political will and steer from the highest political level, as well as the need for strengthening inclusive policy making processes to allow a better integration of gender considerations into the policy cycle.

In the Reform Agenda (RA), adopted in October 2024, Montenegro defined clear measures to increase female labour force participation and to have more efficient response to gender-based violence by the institutions, prosecution and judiciary. Two Active Labour Market programmes that specifically target women will be implemented in the context of introduction of a revised gender targeting methodology, in line with European Social Fund requirements and new kindergartens will be constructed in order to provide 1,800 new places for children. In the area of fighting gender based violence, Montenegro's RA defined that the Supreme state prosecutor will put in place and monitor Guidelines for the prosecution as regards the handling of sexual and gender-based violence cases, in line with relevant articles of the Istanbul Convention, as well as of the EU Directive of Victim Protection. The Guidelines are already giving some positive results as described above. Guidelines for the sentencing in cases of sexual and gender-based violence should also be put in place, in line with the new Criminal Code. The Unique Database on Domestic Violence will need to be improved in order to include at least 95% domestic violence cases reported to the police or to the social welfare offices. Montenegro also has to deliver on the GREVIO/Istanbul convention recommendations to put in place three Crisis Centers for victims of sexual violence in line with the standards outlined in the convention (i.e. integrated health, legal and psychological services for victims). The Gender Equality Profile of Montenegro, updated in 2025, further identified opportunities and recommendations for EU's support to gender equality in targeted priority sectors. This includes capacity building within institutions, further development of the legal framework fully aligned with the Istanbul and CEDAW convention, strengthening capacities of service providers, improve women's position in the labour market, improve the lists of indicators for monitoring progress and raise public awareness.

In July 2025, Montenegro adopted a *National Strategy for Gender Equality* for the period 2026–2029. The Strategy emphasises that despite the existence of legal norms, institutions are still unable to provide efficient and effective protection against discrimination of women and persons with diverse sex and gender identities, particularly those belonging to vulnerable social groups or exposed to multiple discrimination (persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian women, older persons and persons living in remote rural areas of Montenegro). The strategy is grounded in international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5), with emphasis placed on the following principles: anti-discrimination; economic empowerment of women; removing barriers in education, employment and leadership; political participation; challenging prejudices and stereotypes and promoting respect; mainstreaming gender-responsive policies in governance, human resources practices and service delivery and accountability: collecting sex-disaggregated data, monitoring progress and ensuring transparency.

The Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy in Montenegro 2025-2028⁷ aims to build favourable environment for sustainable development of women's entrepreneurship, especially for small and medium enterprises; to ensure better access to finance and strengthened competitiveness of women's business as well as to advocate for the interest and better positioning of women entrepreneurs. The actions foreseen in the CLIP can support the agenda for development of women's entrepreneurship, also in green and the circular economy, as well as in digitalisation.

The Strategy for Public procurement and public-private dialogue 2021-2025 aims to provide access to markets of women-led SMEs, including guidelines for implementing social criteria, catalogue of measures for balancing work and life, training for tenderers and training for public procurement officers to enforce social criteria in tendering procedures. One more improvement is reflected in the Public Procurement Law, which includes the provision for creating gender responsive public procurement. The actions foreseen in the CLIP will support these activities.

2. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

The support of the European Union will be based on the Roadmap for Women's Rights adopted by the European Commission in March 2025⁸, as well as the upcoming new *EU Gender Equality Strategy* currently under preparation.

Priorities in the forthcoming period will have a particular focus on Administrative capacity and acquis alignment, Public Administration Reform, Employment and Social Policies, implementation of measures defined by the Reform Agenda and closing of the negotiation chapters. Strengthening administrative capacities is defined by the Government as a thematic priority of overall importance for Montenegro's capacities in the negotiating process in all sectors, with public administration reform as key in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. There will also be opportunities to promote gender equality in the area of education; the green and digital agenda, and in promoting just transition.

In 2025, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) started a four-year regional project (2025-2029) as a renewed cooperation with EU candidate countries and potential candidates to advance gender equality. The project will introduce the new Gender Equality Index methodology and provide IPA countries with the methodological guidance to support their calculations of national gender equality indices. It will continue with data collection on women and men in decision-making and initiate the first steps toward collecting data on violence against women. It also aims at strengthening capacity-building in gender mainstreaming and in fostering regional cooperation and knowledge sharing.

The “*United in Gender Equality*” project, implemented by the UNDP is in its final stages of implementation, with the aim to support Montenegrin Government in gender mainstreaming of different policies and laws, which goes hand in hand with capacity building and trainings of public servants. There have been efforts to mainstream 25 laws, strategies and policy frameworks, among which the Election Law (with increased quota to 40%), Strategies on Social and Child Protection,

⁷ <https://www.gov.me/clanak/usvojena-strategija-razvoja-zenskog-preduzetnistva-2025-2028-sa-akcionim-planom-za-2025-2026-godinu>

⁸ https://commission.europa.eu/news-and-media/news/eu-roadmap-womens-rights-renewed-push-gender-equality-2025-03-07_en

Deinstitutionalization, and Women's Entrepreneurship, the Agricultural Census Law, etc. and they all constitute part of different EU negotiation chapters. To date 140 professionals have been trained in gender equality and mainstreaming from more than 20 institutions. Some flagship knowledge products have been finalized, such as the 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.

The abovementioned projects deal with horizontal gender equality issues and more targeted actions are outlined in the table below, linking them with GAP III specific thematic objectives.

The EU provides extensive support to civil society organisations under the *Civil Society Facility and Thematic Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy*, where women CSOs also receive support. Since 2021, the EUD aims at reaching more grass-root organisations and those working outside of the capital, through sub-granting. This resulted in a number of grants dealing with gender equality of a rather small scale in terms of funding (up to EUR 10,000-20,000), but very beneficial for dealing with different issues at the local level. Very often these projects focus on women facing multiple discrimination, such as Roma and women with disabilities.

3. Engaging in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

Dialogue on gender equality and women's rights will continue to take place in various formal and informal settings. The Accession process is the key channel for continuous political and policy dialogue to promote and monitor progress on gender equality towards a full alignment with the EU gender equality and non-discrimination acquis in the key sectors, including the Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (Chapter 23), Social policy and Employment (Chapter 19), Public Procurement (Chapter 5) Information society and Media (Chapter 10), Transport policy (Chapter 14), Energy (Chapter 15), Education and culture (Chapter 16), Environment and climate change (Chapter 27), Agriculture and rural development (Chapter 11) and Enterprise and Industrial policy (Chapter 20). Gender equality issues are placed systematically on the agenda of EU-Government dialogue and other regular coordination meetings with ministries and other national institutions including the Ombudsman Office.

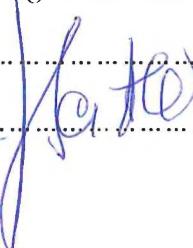
Effective dialogue for gender equality will also be established through the participation in existing gender coordination mechanisms at country level, the use and update of EU enlargement reports, gender profile, EU joint public statements on gender equality, the publication of articles in local and social media. National authorities, international organisations, MSs, and CSOs have been associated to the implementation review (update) of the CLIP in 2025. Implementation and assessment of programmes and projects will also contribute to the promotion and exchange of views among stakeholders and advancement on gender equality in Montenegro, e.g. supporting the mainstreaming of gender at all levels and in all sectors.

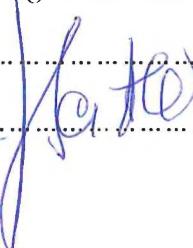
4. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

The EU Delegation in Montenegro defines its annual communication and public diplomacy activity plan, which entails meetings with public figures, public talks and outreach materials online and offline and with strong emphasis on human rights and gender equality. The EU Delegation to Montenegro will continue to organise or complement partners' communication and outreach events to mark the International Women's Day on 8 March, 16 Days of Activism starting on 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), Pride parades, International Roma Day (with strong emphasis on Roma women) etc.

5. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

Montenegro has no technical facility and/or financial resources dedicated specifically to support GAP III implementation. However, relevant mainstreaming support has been provided through the “United in Gender Equality” project implemented by UNDP in 2024 and 2025, as mentioned above, including updating of the Gender country profile. The project also enhanced capacities for gender mainstreaming in strategic frameworks, sector policies, state programmes and development plans.

Date: 

Signature by Head of Delegation: 

Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The overall objective of the EU action for gender equality and women's empowerment in Montenegro is to support the government to comply with national and international gender equality commitments and the EU Gender Equality Acquis. The EU will provide support to the following thematic areas of the EU Gender Action Plan III for 2021-2027 (GAP III) through political dialogue and targeted actions:

GAP III Intervention Area	GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives	EU Intervention tool
A. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence	<p>1. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online through legislation and effective enforcement</p> <p>3. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services</p> <p>4. The right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, free from discrimination, coercion and violence is promoted and better protected</p> <p>5. Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity trafficked for all forms of exploitation and abuse have improved access to adequate and quality services for socio-economic integration and psycho-social support</p> <p>7. Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence</p> <p>8. Quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on different forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices are increasingly collected and used to inform laws, policies and programmes</p> <p>9. Development of new and improvement of existing specialised services for victims of gender-based violence in accordance with the Istanbul Convention.</p>	<p>In the Reform Agenda, under the Fundamental Rights pillar, the following has been planned: <u>Supreme state prosecutor</u> puts in place and monitors <u>standard operating procedures for the prosecution</u> as regards the handling of sexual and gender-based violence cases, in line with relevant articles of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as of the EU Directive of Victim Protection; Standard operating procedures for the sentencing in cases of sexual and gender-based violence are put in place, in line with the new Criminal Code and <u>Standard operating procedures for sentencing</u> in cases of sexual and gender-based violence have been established, in accordance with the new Criminal Code. The Unique Database on Domestic Violence includes at least 95% domestic violence cases reported to the police or to the social welfare offices; Montenegro delivers on the GREVIO/Istanbul convention recommendations to put in place three Crisis Centers for victims of sexual violence in line with the standards outlined in the convention (i.e. integrated health, legal and psychological services for victims).</p> <p>Support to women organisations in Montenegro will be provided through Kvinna to Kvinna direct award of a grant contract in the period 2026-2029. The main focus of the project will be the support to Montenegrin women organisations which deal with services provision in the area of gender-based violence, taking into account also inter-sectionalities such as gender-based violence against women who are also persons with disabilities or LGBTIQ persons. It will also complement the efforts to be invested in the implementation of the Reform Agenda with the aim to improve the response to gender based and sexual violence in the country.</p>

Regional IPA 2024 “*EU4 Gender Equality – Women’s Economic Empowerment and Safety*” project, which focuses on the following:

Component 1: Improving women’s economic empowerment, by strengthening their access to managerial and leadership roles, entrepreneurship, specialised employment opportunities (notably in the digital labour market and green transition) as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and employment; Component 2: Providing increased access to digital essential services for women and girls who are survivors of online and technology-facilitated violence, and tools to protect themselves from such violence; Component 3: Integration of the Western Balkans and Türkiye into the core work areas of the European Institute for Gender Equality.

“*Women’s Access to Justice in the Western Balkans*” is the regional targeted action implemented as a part of Horizontal Facility project implemented by the Council of Europe, with the duration from January 2023 to January 2027 and EU funding of EUR 1 million for that specific component. It aims at strengthening access to justice to women, especially victims of violence, in line with the Istanbul Convention. Educational activities will target legal professionals on gender sensitive responses to cases of violence against women and victim’s access to justice in line with the Istanbul Convention and other European standards. Framework for measuring access to justice including specific challenges facing women to support the Western Balkans region in monitoring women’s access to justice will be proposed, as well as the needs assessment of the current institutional situation regarding barriers and challenges that women face when accessing justice, in particular women victims of violence.

“*United against Ill-treatment and Impunity*” (EUR 142,000; Dec 2023-Dec 2025 is implemented by Human Rights Action and Women’s Rights Centre. It aims at strengthening policy/legal framework and mechanisms for preventing and combating torture and gender-based violence. Its objective is also to enhance the capacity of relevant professionals and CSOs to identify, report and respond to cases of torture and gender-based violence; and improve access to justice and

		support services for victims of torture and gender-based violence.
B. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights	10. Improved access for every individual to sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning services, information, and education on sexual and reproductive rights	
C. Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women	<p>1. Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems</p> <p>2 a) Improved procedures for collecting data on gender-based discrimination at work, enabled monitoring of statistics classified by intersectional criteria: sex and gender, age, ability, ethnicity, and improved procedure for electronic processing of cases</p> <p>2 b) introduced measures to lower gender pay gap, sufficient number of quality, affordable childcare facilities provided, introduced non-transferable paternal leave</p> <p>3. Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources</p> <p>4. Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy</p> <p>5. Improved access for women in all their diversity to managerial and leadership roles in social and economic sectors and fora</p> <p>6. Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys</p>	<p>Support to education, employment and social sector reform in the Reform Agenda has strong focus on gender equality, where upskilling and reskilling of workforce: At least 7% of adults aged 25-64 (of which approx. 50% women) will participate in learning during the last 12 months; Work-based learning in vocational education: - At least 50% of graduates (of which approx. 40% women) from three-year vocational education programmes will benefit from substantial (at least 25% of the programme) work-based learning with employers during their respective education; Work-based learning in higher education: 20% of the total number of students (of which about 50% are women) will benefit from substantial work-based learning with employers during their respective education; two Active Labour Market Measures programmes that specifically target women will be implemented in the context of introduction of a revised gender targeting methodology, in line with ESF+ requirements; Construction of new facilities and provision of 1800 new places for children in kindergartens.</p> <p>Regional IPA 2024 “EU4 Gender Equality – Women’s Economic Empowerment and Safety” project, which focuses on the following:</p> <p>Component 1: Improving women’s economic empowerment, by strengthening their access to managerial and leadership roles, entrepreneurship, specialised employment opportunities (notably in the digital labour market and green transition) as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and employment;</p> <p>Component 2: Providing increased access to digital essential services for women and girls who are survivors of online and technology-facilitated violence, and tools to protect themselves from such violence;</p> <p>Component 3: Integration of the Western Balkans and Türkiye into the core work areas of the European Institute for Gender Equality.</p>

	<p><i>“Women microenterprise development in the cross-border area Montenegro-Albania”</i> (total budget EUR 483.930.25, EU contribution: EUR 384,111.43. Jan 2025-Jan 2027). The project strengthens women’s entrepreneurship initiatives in the Ulcinj and Shkodra regions, and provides sustainable solutions for the development of women-led micro and small businesses in the cross-border area.</p> <p><i>“Regional Training Academy for boosting employability of vulnerable youth”</i> in the cross border area Serbia and Montenegro (total budget EUR 239,900, EU contribution EUR 204,000, February 2024-February 2026). The project aims at improving knowledge, skills and competence, and work experience of unemployed and employed women and men to better adjust to the needs of the labour market and to exploit the employment potential in perspective sectors.</p> <p><i>“Young NEETs: new opportunities for work and increased employability – UNEETED”, in the cross-border area Montenegro-Kosovo;</i> total budget EUR 206,250.56, EU part: 165,000.00€. March 2023 - March 2025). A comprehensive ethnographic research on young NEETs was completed, networking of young NEETs and various stakeholders was established, Knowledge and skills of young NEETs were improved and a share of young NEETs succeeded in finding a job. Communication and cooperation between young NEETs and local institutions is established and provides a basis for further steps towards improving the position of young NEETs.</p> <p><i>“Skills for Sustainable Employment in the Cross-Border Region of Montenegro and the Republic of Kosovo – No Borders!”</i> (EUR 223,000; March 2023 – March 2025) increased the professional skills and competencies of unemployed women in the cross-border region to match the employment demands in the tourism and hospitality sector; developed self-employment/entrepreneurship skills - strategic planning, networking, marketing and sales. In the context of the 2024-2027 programming, an important <i>Operational Programme in the area of Employment and Social Policy</i> is being implemented, with an overarching budget of 30 million. It has a strong focus on gender mainstreaming and foresees activities to include more women in the labour market, as well as to</p>
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		<p>enhance services to women victim of violence. Other social services will also be targeted, allowing for an opportunity to mainstream gender equality. A complementary human resources programme to recruit and train staff will also include specific gender equality components. In September 2025, Technical Assistance project “Improved evidence-based policymaking, implementation practices and coordination in the ESP sector and strengthened capacities to participate in European Social Fund” prepared an “Analysis of the situation of unemployed women in the labour market in Montenegro” in order to identify obstacles for activation and employment of women.</p>
D. Promoting equal participation and leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making 2. Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights 4. Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviors promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels – through civic education, media, education and culture at all levels 5. Improved systems for collecting quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on women’s political participation and leadership 	<p>In July 2025, the Parliament adopted amendments to the electoral legislative framework, partially addressing existing recommendations from the OSCE/ODIHR, including oversight of campaign finance and media, improving the integrity of election administration, increasing gender quota on electoral lists to 40% and introducing an election day for local elections. However, further changes are necessary to fully align the legal framework with the EU <i>acquis</i> and European standards on inclusive, transparent and resilient electoral processes, which will be in focus in the upcoming period.</p>
F. Climate change and environment and Digitalisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are more gender-responsive at local, national, regional and international level 4. Women and men in all their diversity, increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities and alternative livelihoods in the green economy and the circular economy 	<p>The gender perspective of climate change in Montenegro is under-explored. There is a comprehensive framework for gender equality and one for climate change but the intersection of the two is still lacking in government actions and in civil society work. The same can be observed in the field of women and STEM, as gender policy documents overlooked STEM, while innovation, technology, science, research and development, digitalisation and other relevant documents lack gender perspective (RCC, 2021).</p> <p>In the Reform Agenda, under Education/Human Capital Development, the following has been envisaged: 17% of the total number of primary and secondary schools have an EdTech hub, i.e., 25% of students (of which approx. 50% female) have the opportunity to use it; 34% of the total number of primary and secondary schools have an EdTech hub, i.e., 50% of students (of which</p>

		approx. 50% female) have the opportunity to use it
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