



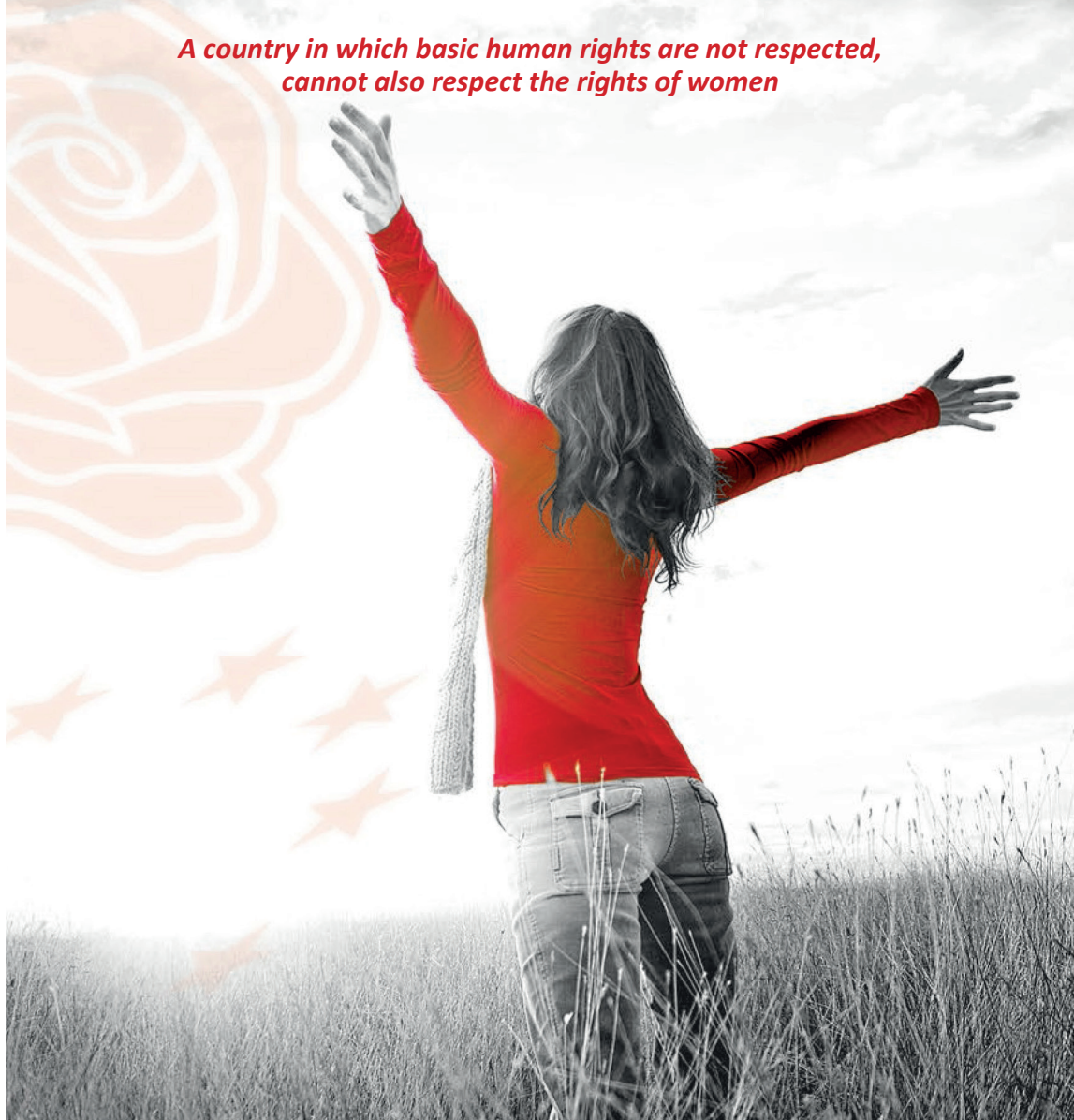
## Celebrating 25 years of activities

Addendum to the Gender Equality Platform

TRANSFORMING POLITICS THROUGH A GENDER LENS

- Positions and Recommendations from the Korčula School discussions -

*A country in which basic human rights are not respected,  
cannot also respect the rights of women*



*In 2015 the CEE Network for Gender Issues spearheaded work on a joint South Eastern European Regional Gender Equality Platform. The Platform was signed by the majority of parties in the region and other women and men politicians from the Party of European Socialists.*

*The annual Think Tank Korčula School sessions ( [www.ceegendernetwork.eu](http://www.ceegendernetwork.eu)), organised by the CEE Network, are attended by over sixty participants from progressive, socialist, social-democratic parties and their women's forums from South Eastern Europe, Party of European Socialists (PES) and Party of European Socialist Women (PESW) members, experts and civil society representatives. The topics discussed relate to women in politics and political parties, economic and social issues that impact on gender equality, violence against women, migrant crisis and women, inter-generational dialogue and the rise of conservative and right wing politics that impact on gender equality. The messages and recommendations included in this Addendum are based on the discussions, recommendations and conclusions of the Korčula Schools on specific issues within the overarching topic of "Transforming Politics through a Gender Lens". These are now annexed to the Regional Gender Equality Platform.*

*Women's human rights and gender equality is at the heart of this agenda. In an increasingly conservative, right wing Europe, and the world, democracy and human rights in general and women's human rights specifically are under attack. Our achievements can easily melt. Progressives, social-democrats and the left cannot be complacent and wait for the storm to pass, but rather engage with citizens, women and men, to change this course of events in the interest of democracy, peace, security, social justice and development as Europe develops its 2030 strategic agenda. There are innovative solutions in Europe. A participatory process to take us out of the crisis is the only way for the citizens of Europe to understand the challenges and shape their the future. The following positions and recommendations provide a gender lens on how to transform politics in the interest of our citizens.*

*Nana Šaino Šibonić*

**Chair, CEE Network for Gender Issues International Board**



## TOPIC 1: Transformative Politics – Women in Politics and Political Parties

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
SD parties in the region should, whether in election or governing mode: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reinforce their fundamental societal role,</li> <li>renew the socialdemocratic principles</li> <li>develop a new ideological and political paradigm and societal compact true to the principles of social democracy</li> </ul>	A critical analysis and introspection is necessary to identify what went wrong and what are the lessons learnt. Unfortunately, introspection and critical analysis, especially in the South Eastern European parties leads to internal rifts which do not facilitate positioning within right wing dominated politics in the region
Political parties in the region should also work on their internal democracy and develop new forms of communication with the society	SD parties seem to project themselves as political elites, above civil society. More space for views, dialogue, interest groups and issues is needed within parties. More substantive internal and public dialogue should go beyond just public relations. A broader and open discussion on political identity and ideological direction should be launched as parties prepare new party platforms and election strategies. Communicating these clearly is important, since left parties have alienated their own constituencies, including women who continue to be excluded and serve often only as party organisers and not ideologues/leaders.
In depth statistical data about women in SD parties needs more systematic tracking to inform analysis and action.	Party statistics are lacking. Analysis shows that women, especially young women, are more committed to party work and tend to participate in elections more than young men
SD parties need to develop cadres with specific expertise for informed political and ideological positioning. Political academies for party cadres, including specific programmes for women, should be enhanced and sustained.	Results of training and capacity building initiatives within parties and the region should be analysed, especially in view of the big turnover of participants and their role in politics. It is not easy to attract women to training programs. Men should be equally included in gender equality training, i.e. gender equality concepts and principles should be mainstreamed into capacity building activities and not as a standalone only.
More effort should be made to continue work with women who have been trained so that they can upgrade their skills and influence and mentor other women.	SD parties should, as much as possible refrain from one shot deals meaning also that WFs need to be sustained and supported over time and this work budgeted.
The autonomy of women's forums, as well as youth forums, within parties should be supported	WFs and YFs have an important role to play not only within parties but also in society and should be given autonomy of action and not only be party appendices. Close cooperation between WFs and YFs is important to strengthen their influence.
The establishment of more active networks at local level, including a sustained ideological dialogue between the national and local levels can only ensure better advocacy, outreach and party electoral results. This also means careful attention to the language used in societal dialogue so that the electorate can understand what SD stands for.	Parties need to overcome the opportunistic attitude to follow and compete with the right by abandoning their ideological orientation. This has cost votes and blurred the political edge and ideological distinction between the left and the right and SD visibility and identity. Today's IT technology and social networks offer many opportunities and these need to be seized for enhanced communication.



Insist that when S&D parties make coalitions, and often approach the political centre, they do not sacrifice and trade off gender equality to reach compromise which will end up being very expensive for our democracy.	It is often easier for parties to trade off gender equality concerns for more “important” political considerations when going into coalitions, but in this way they sacrifice the core principle of social democracy and their own raison d’être.
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## TOPIC 2: Women and Labour Policies

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
Assuming positions on employment and social policies implies: i. political party action and work with its electoral base, especially in terms of national-local and vice versa political awareness and action and implementation; ii. social-democratic, left and progressive political parties to remain true to their values when in government; iii. strong cooperation with the civil society, including the private sector, to ensure that SD, left and progressive political options can become a reality; iv. strong and continuous work with the electorate (also in between elections) to absorb the tension around reality, challenges and solutions.	Employment and social policies are the responsibility of the State but political parties, especially progressives and social-democrats have a historical role to play whether in power or oppositions
Reconciling work and life policies cuts across employment policies, social welfare systems and gender equality action.	Social-democratic governments and their left coalitions should strive to formulate cross-sectoral, integrated and consistent policy packages.
<b>Employment policies need to:</b> i. ensure the protection of human rights of women and men (women who have not found employment for a long period of time, women of 55 years of age, young women, single mothers, minority women, women with special needs, women with low levels of education); ii. provide a plethora of measures to ensure flexibility, adaptability and versatility in terms of meeting the needs of the different social groups; iii. address the pay gap existing among men and women throughout Europe, but also in the region and support the PES/PES Women platform/campaign including the “glass ceiling”(real, fictional or reversible).	Flexible working time can be helpful both to workers and employers. This is not important only due to the length workers spend at the job, but also in the way working hours are organized/distributed in the workplace. This can have significant implications for the quality of professional life, wellbeing of workers, efficiency and competitiveness of enterprises. When selecting models - forms of flexible working hours – it is important to take into account the needs, shape and character of the professional activity and its relationship to other activities, social/public implications and citizens’ rights and interests, territorial and climate differences and specificities, traditional and family life and needs and their adaptation to meet professional obligations public transportation measures etc.



<p><b>Specific recommendations:</b></p> <p>i. revise labour laws from the perspective of protection of women's labour right;</p> <p>ii. establish special employment policies for the vulnerable women groups who have difficulties in finding employment;</p> <p>iii. provide incentives for men to enter "traditionally women's professions" e.g. in health, education, care economy and labour accessibility;</p> <p>iv. better apply the principle of flexi-security in the private and public sectors to decrease the divisions within the labour market and help balance work and family life as well as revisit part-time job policies from ideological and gender perspectives;</p> <p>v. sanction employers who discriminate against women due to their family status or desire to establish a family, often a feature of the private sector;</p> <p>vi. change and amend legal regulation stipulating gender equality and its harmonization with European legislation and enforce implementation;</p> <p>vii. support PES and PES Women in the campaign to reduce the pay gap between men and women;</p> <p>viii. strengthen cooperation with TUs.</p>	<p>Gender differentiated approaches to labour policies should be a sine qua non. This is often ignored as some measures of gender mainstreaming have not given results.</p>
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### TOPIC 3: Violence Against Women

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
The Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women is an important document	The proof will be in its implementation especially as in some countries like Croatia there is a strong conservative, right wing movement to repeal the ratification. It often seems that countries in the region sign and ratify international documents, especially those relating to gender equality that do not "cost them too much" but make them "look good" in the eyes of the international community, hence doing lip service to the issue and limiting implementation of the same. This also applies to UN conventions and documents.
Institutional set up and capacities should be established for implementation relating to law enforcement (judiciary, police) and social services (safe houses, rehabilitation).	Violence against women, harassment and discrimination is perpetuated within the institutional framework itself – by government officials who are patriarchal, traditional and who tend to discriminate without having the necessary training, education and awareness. Different laws and regulations in different spheres are generally not weighed against their impact on women's rights and discrimination which is then perpetuated in their enforcement.
Political awareness and readiness to address violence against women, including in center left political parties on a substantive and systematic level as a matter of party policy should be developed.	Sexism remains as an issue within parties and sexual harassment in the party is rarely sanctioned. But when sanctioned it gives results! The challenge remains how to position and empower women politicians within their parties and in parliament to raise the issue of violence against women and non-discrimination.
Governments should budget the implementation of the Istanbul Convention	Gender sensitive budgeting has not given the answer so far, as it remained isolated from the mainstream budget decision-making. Even when targeting health and social services resources remain limited. But the implementation of the Istanbul Convention should be separately budgeted and progressive parties should push for this in Parliament.



Patriarchy is not gender neutral and power relations perpetuate violence warranting a thorough change of relationships between the sexes.	This remains one of the more elusive issues – how to change prejudices, patriarchal relationships and inequality in societies which are going through a social regression in terms of “re-traditionalisation”. Patriarchy is not gender neutral and power relations perpetuate violence warranting a thorough change of relationships between the sexes.
Statistical data should be improved within an integrated gender based violence database as warranted by the Istanbul Convention	Statistical data is lacking both as a lack of instruments and capacity of statistical offices, but also due to a lack of reporting by victims (it is often perceived as an internal family issue linked to “shame”). When cases are not reported the victims are also not compensated, legally or even financially.

#### TOPIC 4: Migration and Migrant Women

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
Urgent action is needed to holistically address the root causes of the refugee and migrant crisis including a well organised, thought out and resourced integration of refugees and migrants and a more active stance on resolution of regional and international crises	Socialist, democratic and progressive leaders should not be opportunistic catering primarily to the public opinion polls but they need to be bold and assume leadership, pledge commitment, return to their historical internationalism and solidarity, act politically and responsibly. They should uphold gender differentiated approaches and cooperate with the feminist movement to achieve this
Social-democratic and progressive parties, also led by engaged and not gender-neutral women leaders, should be key political agents in finding solutions to the crisis with clear and bold messages	Migration issues have entered mainstream politics. Progressive, social democratic feminist women's organisations should also lead and raise their voices for peace, security, solidarity. Being opportunistic may help in the short run but not in the long run.
Women migrants should not be treated as victims but rather as empowered actors in the creation of their own and European and Mediterranean destiny at the negotiating table	Victimising women stands in the way of their empowerment, self-organisation and integration into European societies.
Organise a pan-European campaign on the plight of unaccompanied children and a pan-Mediterranean political initiative on gender sensitive responses to peace, security and the refugee and migrant crisis	Both are overdue but can assist in sending social democratic messages and rallying progressives

#### TOPIC 5: Inter-generational Dialogue – Gender Lens

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
More inter-generational dialogue is necessary and an interface should also happen between older and young women feminists, activists and political leaders through learning and mentoring	Women and the youth are a substantial political actor in society and in parties. This should not only be recognised by SD parties, but politically supported through capacity building and adequate funding. This would strengthen coalitions and the social democratic cause but also provide the necessary political and ideological perspective for the renewal and reinvigoration of the social democratic movement





Social democrats and progressives need to work more with the media and civil society organisations to thwart the messages of fear and moral and political confusion created by the right in the public space	Political parties on the centre left should address citizens' concerns through selective and well thought out terminology, including on cultural and religious issues, especially since the impact of the refugee and migrant flows will, in a short term, produce a strain on the social welfare systems. Hence, it is important to address education, health, housing, childcare and employment opportunities especially for women searching. This is especially important for dialogue within the millennials
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## TOPIC 6: Conservative Politics and Gender Equality

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
Address the urgent issue of internal immigration through political, economic, social and cultural measures and targeted capacity building for the young to meet the challenges of a changing labour market	Young people are leaving the region which is already experiencing serious labour shortages and impacting the economic potential to grow. This is an issue far beyond the demographic populist solutions offered by the right and the church. Even those who are employed either work in precarious conditions or do not receive wages regularly. Young women have shown more resilience and readiness for change than young men
Demographic and population policies should not fog gender equality concerns and be formulated at the expenses of women and their rights	The infiltration of conservative, clerical, right wing and patriarchal forces in all walks of life are advocating the return to the three Ks for women – küche, kinder, kirche
It is a woman's human right to decide when she will have children	Financial stimuli for child bearing are marring the real problems and comprehensive solution to a viable demographic policy. The state needs to create conditions, implement measures to support this right.
<p>Social measures: supporting and encouraging paternal leave; diverting resources (for instance imposing tax on the Church) to child care facilities, ensuring child caring facilities free of charge</p> <p>Economic measures: implementing gender sensitive budgeting; creating employment opportunities and raising the minimum wage; supporting work life balance policies, rent subsidies; supporting millennials to adapt to the changing labour market</p> <p>Health: legal, accessible, free of charge abortion with adequate information provided to women in all parts of the country, free contraception, planned parenthood, universal and free health coverage</p> <p>Education: sexual education and information, life long education and professional opportunities adapted to the changing marketplace</p> <p>Immigration: creation of employment, housing, job advancement and overall social and political conditions for people to feel comfortable, in a democratic environment based on human rights and the rule of law, to remain in their countries and fulfil their aspirations.</p>	General positions on demographics and reproductive rights are no more helpful. Progressives have to develop corresponding and well-founded argumentation, address people's concerns and prejudices, find new ways of funding their activities and solicit expert advice to respond to the right wing ideology on specific issues such as gender equality and reproductive rights



## TOPIC 7: Regional Development, Peace, Stability and Cooperation

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
Tensions in the region prevail between and among countries, violence against the individual, and especially women, remain in spite of legal measures, constitutions are not respected and the rule of law is still elusive	Democracy is still very fragile in the Balkans while autocracy, kleptocracy and the rule of corrupt elites (linkages between the political and big business establishments) are still prevalent. The system and the state cannot function better without the rule of law and when political ethics are lacking.
In the name of regional stability the West, especially the EU as the biggest player, is supporting authoritarian regimes and turning a blind eye to the democracy deficiency arguing for “stability”	The Balkans is living a moment of distortion of democracy and democratic values. The EU seems coerced to force ‘stabilitocracy’ in the region. This, in the situation of a democracy deficit, means perpetuated stagnation and crisis protraction. International support for authoritarian and conservative (even neo-fascist) political elites limits the political and ideological space for progressive forces in the region. With a simmering discontent one may ask the question is it really stability or a transitory phase until a social eruption?
Poverty and inequalities are on the rise, pension reforms, social welfare cuts, unemployment, small wages are going to further exacerbate the social situation and women and young people most often than not bear the brunt	Economic development goes beyond GDP and economic, and human security, escapes the radar. There has not been concerted effort to address the technological impact on the economy the labour market. This especially affects women as they are dominant in administration and the service industry.
Trade unions seem to have been marginalised while traditional well protected workers used to be key constituency for trade unions and social-democratic parties	Lack of cooperation and joint action among the political parties and forces on the left result in fragmentation, marginalisation and unwarranted bickering among politicians and parties. This is in the interest of the right wing. How to stop this party and political left fragmentation – could there be a minimum common denominator to drive concerted action against the right, beyond daily politics?
Regional cooperation between and among SD parties is inadequate. Their cooperation can substantively contribute to regional peace, stability and cooperation and also engage with civil society initiatives across the region.	Parties are confronted with common challenges - rise of authoritarianism and “illiberal” democracies. Progressives, social-democrats, the left cannot be by-standers but rather actors and leaders. In South Eastern Europe they should put their internal differences aside and unite, reaching out to the ordinary woman and man to counter this right wing wave. This also implies closer cooperation and joint planning among women’s forums of social-democratic parties in the region and their outreach to feminist groups. Being in the political minority in countries does not exonerate social-democratic parties from their responsibility to the people and the country.
New trends show that important change is possible in the region of South Eastern Europe through a different approach resting on openness, clarity of message, solidarity and participation.	The conservative “revolution” is quite forceful and the young generation is looking for progressives and social democrats to provide responses. A new generation of politicians is in the making and needs to come onto the scene. There are fortunately also new trends like the success of the social-democrats in Macedonia which can open up new possibilities.

