

25
years

Transforming
Politics
through
a Gender
Lens





Transforming Politics through a Gender Lens

2019

Supported by: UK Labour Party Westminster Foundation

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We would especially like to thank the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (EFDS) under which auspices we have been established. We are most grateful to EFDS leaders, Heinz Fischer, Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Bo Toresson, Conny Fredriksson, Lena Ag, Jan Marinus Wiersma, Arjen Berkvens and Danijel Tadić among others, for their support over time. Without the steady financial support of the Olof Palme International Center and its leadership, all this work would not have been possible. This publication would not have seen light without the support of the UK Labour Party Westminster Foundation.

The support of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and PESW, FEPS, FES and the S&D Group in the European Parliament over the last eight years has moved our Network into a think tank mode and fostered substantive dialogue on how to transform and promote politics through a gender lens.

At the end of the day it is the dedication of and inspiration from women and men in the region who have strongly contributed to progressive initiatives and political activities to promote the gender equality agenda as a constituent part of democracy, human rights, social justice and solidarity. We remain particularly grateful to many women trainers in planning and finalising our projects. We look forward today to their contribution to the implementation of our ePrimer on gender equality.

The contribution of male politicians to this work has been priceless. We are on the way to a genuine political dialogue on the impact that our policies are having on women and men in our societies and to a gender based disaggregation of policy solutions.

Today, special thanks go to the CEE Network International Board, Advisory Council, interns and volunteers for strategic political positioning and impact.

CEE Network for Gender Issues

Foreword

Time flies. And here we are – twenty five years down the road working for women, with women, with women and men for gender equality. Looking back, this has been a rewarding, albeit sometimes thorny, trip. So much has been achieved. Equality legislation enacted, laws changed, quotas adopted, electoral lists and systems improved to reflect parity on the party lists, number of women in parliaments tripled in the region, labour laws changed, fighting violence against women has become a societal issue and cause. In socialist, social-democratic and progressive parties gender equality is today not an “if” but a “must” and a “given”.

Yet, societal development is not a linear and a once-for-all guaranteed process. So much remains to be done to make gender equality a reality. The hardest and most persistent are patriarchal values, regress in the name of “safeguarding” the nation, its traditions and cultures, persistent chauvinism and more aggressive right wing, conservative and clerical approaches to the individual and his or her rights including sexual orientation, reproductive rights, the role of the family in modern society and the concept of gender as a social construct. It seems as if we have successfully built the discourse and legislative frameworks but the foundations of a socially just, human rights based society are still wobbly and elusive. As a result, gender equality remains a litmus test for the state of democracy and human rights in any given country.

In the quarter of a century of its existence the CEE Network for Gender Issues has, based on a firm belief that women’s rights are human rights, accompanied the changing social, political and economic environment and arising challenges with recommendations on corresponding policy options, approaches and tools. The retrospection in this book depicts that trajectory.

There is no equality without gender equality. There is no human rights without women’s rights. There is no democracy without both.



Daša Šašić Šilović

Chair, International Board CEE Network

Background

Established in 1994 by the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. In 2013 (Zagreb) the Network and the European Forum will celebrate its 20 years of political and civic engagement in democracy building in CEE countries in transition. The Network has a strong base, support and engagement from men and women in the European Forum and social democratic (SD), left and progressive political parties in Europe.



Mission

- to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality objectives into mainstream strategies, policies and programs of center-left, progressive and social democratic political parties in transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe



Constituency and Community of Practice

- CEE Network is a coalition of women's organization and groups from SD, left and progressive political parties and civil society organizations. CEE Network activists, women and men, come from all walks of life. They are political leaders, politically engaged activists or active participants in civic movements from Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, as well as from other parts of Europe and most recently progressive and social democratic women leaders in Arab countries in transition (program launched in 2012).
- The Network is an associate member of PES¹ Women and cooperates closely with the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS).

1 The **Party of European Socialists** brings together the Socialist, Social Democratic and Labor Parties of the European Union.

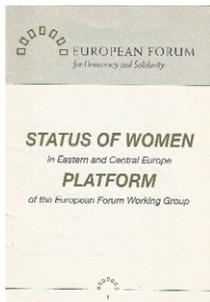
Signature activities

- analysis and formulation of strategies policies and election platforms regarding most acute political, economic and social problems that women are facing in transition and identification of good practice
- capacity and women's organization building
- support to nationwide gender awareness campaigns
- harmonization of national legislation on gender issues with that of the European Union and elaboration of gender sensitive policy guidelines for the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the EU
- yearly flagship publication, published in Hungary, on political, economic and social status of women with written inputs from well-known SD, progressive and left oriented women champions and human rights activists from the CEE region
- active network, including an electronic network, of women's organizations and coordination of their activities

25 year track record - Strong results

- Working with political parties, the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, PES Women and FEPS, the CEE Network has been instrumental in mainstreaming women's concerns and gender equality related issues into SD, progressive and left political party policies and programs, into country mainstream political discourse and often into government policies
- the CEE Network was instrumental in the establishment and the development of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Gender Task Force in 1997²
- it custom designed and implemented the "Women Can Do It" gender awareness programs (1996) in the South Eastern Europe and later the "Youth Can Do It" manual
- signature annual publications as advocacy and policy guidance to women's organizations of social democratic, progressive and left parties.

² Until 2012 the GTF was chaired by the CEE Network Executive Director.



Phase I (1994-1997): establishment of the Network, mapping of existing organizations, assessment of the situation and impact of transition, as well as strategy, outreach and advocacy (including publications), support to women’s party organizations and mainstreaming into European Forum activities



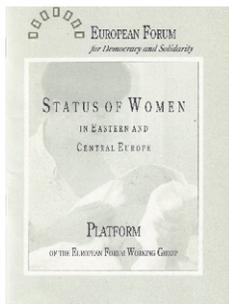
Results: Network established with strategy, workplan; budget approved by European Forum foundations; political positions set on key issues relating to transition – focus on political engagement and gender balance in political leaderships and economic and social impact of transition; established partnerships with feminist networks and institutions; number of election platforms engendered; successful conference organized in Prague bringing together more than 100 participants from women’s organizations (political and NGOs), trade unionists and feminists groups on issues relating to women’s empowerment and gender equality in transition countries.



Phase II (1998-2000): establishment of strong feminist streams within left wing parties in 21 former transition countries and strengthening their outreach to progressive women NGOs and trade union women activists



Results: newly formed social democratic and progressive parties became champions of gender equality; women party organizations/wings were established; party quota regulations in the party statutes were enacted; more articulated political and public positions to promote women’s economic and social rights, right to free and safe abortion, paid maternity and parental leave, and special women pension rights were promoted; strengthened regional cooperation; launch of the Women Can Do It program applied to local and national elections in SEE in particular with tangible effect.



Phase III (2000 – 2004): acting as a think tank for social democratic and progressive women’s organizations and political parties in the future 12 new EU member states; main partner and supporter of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force³.

In 2001 CEE Network for Gender Issues Executive Board decided to reorganize the Network by establishing three subregional small offices – in Ljubljana for SEE, in Budapest for CEE and in Tallinn for the Baltic states, Western Russia, Ukraine in Belarus.



Results: progressive social democratic women politicians in SEE became the backbone of nation-wide women coalitions trying to use the EU enlargement process for the introduction of the highest EU standards on gender equality into their national legislations; legal quota rules in the first 4 out of 12 SEE countries (BiH, Macedonia, Kosovo, Slovenia) were enacted; SD parties from the new member states mainly maintained the average of women MEPs in the PES group in 2004 European elections.⁴

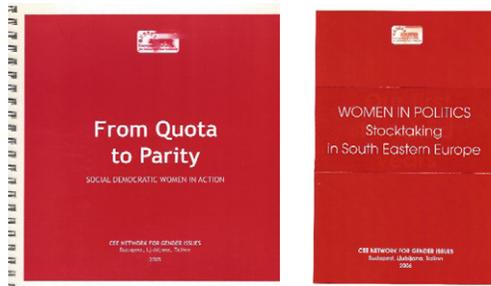
³ Establishment of cross party- civil society- governments-international actors regional projects for political empowerment of women in the SEE region

⁴ Dr. Zita Gurnmai (Hungarian Socialist party and Member of CEE International Board) is now in her second term as MEP, one of the most visible SD women MEPs in the EU parliament and President of PES Women



Phase IV (2004-2009): Systematic capacity building work, especially in collaboration with PES Women, with SD, left and progressive women organizations in 10 new EU member states continued; transfer of SD policies and best practice from best performing European parties on specific gender equality issues (child care, reproductive health and rights, gender sensitive active employment policies and political empowerment of women); advisory services to European Women’s Lobby parity campaign in preparation for 2009 EP elections and assistance, to women in SD and progressive parties in new member states to maintain the high placing of women on the party lists for European elections.

Results: social democratic parties maintained 40% of elected women MEPs’; ii. SD women defined and transformed at least a number social democratic gender equality policies into the governmental policies when their parties were in power serving in coalition governments (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia); iii. gender equality mechanisms were established, national gender equality plans were adopted, quota were enacted; iv. support to NGO campaigns to enact national legislation on violence against women (Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro).





Phase V (2010-2012): CEE Network continued its work with women party organizations mostly in the SEE region, focusing on the issue of mentoring and strategies to address the consequences of the financial and economic crises and ensure the respect of women’s economic, social and personal rights. The Network initiated a project, in cooperation with the LP Westminster Foundation, to support SD and progressive women in Arab spring countries to promote peer learning and experiences regarding women’s issues in countries of tradition.

As a follow up to the Istanbul Conference with women from the Arab countries, the CEE Network organized an open debate with experienced political and public activists: Pia Locatelli, honorary President SIW, Daša Šašić Šilović, Chair CEE Network, Zita Gurmai, President PESW, Sonja Lokar, CEE Network Executive Director in Tunis. The meeting objectives were to inform and facilitate exchange among progressive women from the Arab countries on how to organize their own regional cooperation in order to strengthen their activities in support of women’s human rights. Issues included how to map the gender equality situation within progressive parties in Arab countries, how to sensitize women leaders, include gender sensitive policies in party documents and electoral programmes and how to build coalitions on the center left.

Results: in-depth assessment of responses to the economic and social crisis and formulation of proposals to SD/progressive political parties; launch of the Korčula School – high level annual consultation on women’s empowerment and key current gender equality issues; iii. launch of the project in Arab spring countries; iv. strengthened partnerships.

The Gender Network produces an Annual Report and an annual signature publication.



Phase VI (2012-2018):

In 2015 the Network initiated and brokered with women’s forums of SD parties in the region a joint CEE Gender Equality Platform which today represents the basis of capacity building; it strengthened its social networks and outreach in the region but also within the European social democratic family becoming a full member of PES Women and Observer member of the PES. A web based toolkit for political leaders

on gender equality has been developed for political party leaderships.

Successful organization of the signature Korčula School on gender issues with topics: i. women in politics (2012), ii. economic and social challenges to gender equality (2013), iii. violence against women with focus on sexual harassment (2014), iv. Transformative politics – women in politics (2015), v. refugee and migrant crisis through a gender differentiated lens(2016), vi. Transforming politics – inert-generational dialogue on gender equality and solidarity (2017).

The Network continued to work with the Arab Women’s Network, as well as strengthened partnerships with women’s S&D party forums and other NGOs. Particular activity involved support to women’s S&D party forums in training and gender advocacy. The Network leaflet on principles for gender equality prepared for 2014 European Parliament elections was translated into 6 languages in the region and used beyond EP elections.



In 2011, the CEE Network has established its think tank – “Korčula School – Transforming Politics through a Gender Lens”. The think tank gathers women and men leaders from South

Eastern Europe and beyond to discuss gender equality issues. The “School” has become a recognized think tank because of its innovative, open, progressive and substantive approach to equality and human rights. It has reviewed and formulated progressive, social-democratic policies on issues such as women in politics and internal party democracy, labour and social policy, violence against women, migration policies and women’s issues, inter-generational dialogue and countering right wing politics from a gender lens and others.



Results: strengthened political network, peer learning and political outreach. Establishment of a strong platform for political mainstreaming of gender equality into party political platforms and activities.



Partners

The CEE Network is member of PES Women, Observer Member of PES, Observer Member of FEPS. It is also member of the Board of the European Partners for the Environment (EPE) working on sustainable development and Europe 2030 strategy, as well as of the NATO Civil Society Advisory Panel on Women, Peace and Security.

The CEE Network cooperates with left-of-center European foundations that make up the European Forum, especially the Karl Renner Institut, Alfred Mozer Stichting, Olof Palme Center, Westminster Foundation and Jean Jaurès foundation in its first phases. It also established cooperation with trade unions, gender equality experts and academia. It is today primarily financed by a grant from the International Olof Palme Center, as the Network strategic partner, and for individual initiatives by other progressive foundations.

CEE Network has over time established strong partnerships with feminist movements in the region, individual champions for women’s rights and a diverse group of international partners. It has worked with UNDP, UNIFEM, UN ECE, OSCE ODIHIR and other international institutions. CEE Network is also part of a pan-European civil society initiative in “Rethinking Europe – Europe 2030) strategy formulation. CEE Network is also member of the NATO Civil Society Panel on Women, Peace and Security and its Steering Committee.





The CEE Network has international recognition and cooperates with PES, PES Women, SIW, FEPS, NDI, IPU and OSCE transferring experience, knowledge, analysis, approaches and methodologies across Europe, especially in CEE, and through consulting services in countries like Turkey, the CIS (Ukraine, Georgia, Turkmenistan), Iraq, Hong Kong and Pakistan, North African Arab countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon). It provided advice to the party movements and increasingly supports progressive women's movements in Arab spring countries and initiatives of the LP Westminster Foundation in Africa.

In 2012 the first joint project was implemented with FEPS in order to bring together SD women from the old EU democracies and from the SEE region in a joint effort to prepare their proposals how to mainstream gender equality in PES electoral strategy for 2014 in the context of economic recession and overall crises of EU political architecture, economic and social model.



CEE Network International Board



Daša Šašić Šilović, Chair, former UNDP Senior Policy Adviser on Development Cooperation and Senior Gender Adviser in New York, member of a number of international boards, worked in academia and journalism.



Lovorka Marinović, Regional Project Manager, Center for New Initiatives president, worked with IOM. Specialised in gender and migration, experienced in developing and strengthening gender equality institutional mechanisms and migration policies.



Emina Abrahamsdotter, President of PROFFS, consultant and expert on gender and labour, BH/Sweden.



Kalinka Gaber, State Secretary for European Integration, Skopje, Northern Macedonia.



Zita Gurmai, President Party of European Socialist Women, former member of European Parliament, Budapest/Brussels.



Mojca Kleva Kekuš, former Member of the European Parliament (S&D), Slovenian National Assembly representative in Brussels member of the Slovenian Parliament for seven years. President of “Progresiva” and a Board member of Foundation for European Progressive Studies.



Pia Locatelli, International Secretary of Socialist Party, member of European Socialist Party Presidency, former Member of European Parliament and Member of Italian Parliament, Italy.



Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Hungarian Business Association, Budapest, former Regional Environment Center Executive Director. Specialised in gender and ecology (green economy), Hungary.



Tamara Tripić, former Vice President of Democratic Party of Serbia, member of Parliament and member of the Vračar Borough Council, City of Belgrade, present president of the Network for Democratic Dialogue Managing Board, Serbia.

Sonja Lokar as the first Executive Director (2000-2016), Mija Javornik, regional manager (2010-2016) and Karolina Leaković have contributed to our development, advocacy and capacity development in the region.

The CEE Network team which has grown over time is an example of enthusiasm and voluntarism – Bojan Richter, Antonija Petković, Ivan Nekić, Lada Marinović, Jelena Pecotić, Katja Jelčić have strongly contributed to our success and visibility.

Contact



Ivan Nekić (2018- ...) Communications Manager and Editor



Jelena Pecotić, Research Assistant and Board Secretary

www.ceegendernetwork.eu

Annex

Gender Equality Platform

- ① *Based on the socialist, social democratic ideological socio-political goals, aspirations and secular worldviews, we are concerned about the developments in our countries and the region. The transition to a democratic, multi-party and market-oriented society has not brought the desired social transformation and the expected rapid economic and social progress and well-being. Conservative and clerical forces, and the neo-fascist right itself, continue to encourage nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance, jeopardising fundamental human rights and the status of national communities. They are pulling us backwards and not taking us into the future.*
- ② *The neo-liberal model of economic development has brought prosperity to a small segment of the population that has often enriched itself illegally through corruption, in collusion with political and business elites. We should decisively reject this model, because it resulted in social disintegration, unemployment, poverty and an unacceptable erosion of the welfare state, which is the main accomplishment of socialist, social-democratic and progressive movements.*
- ③ *Unemployment continues to grow, with women and young people being the most vulnerable groups, birth rates are not increasing, poverty and social problems are piling up, young people continue to go abroad in search of a better future, and old people are subjected to daily reductions in benefits and their human dignity is being violated as they are pauperised. **Unless we substantially change the political, economic and social policies in our countries they will be depleted of their most precious assets - human resources - educated, skilled and dedicated women and men, while young generations will seek a future elsewhere. National development will be jeopardised and peace, regional security and stability, already fragile, will be seriously undermined.***
- ④ *The constitutional and legal guarantees of equality between women and men are being threatened.*

*Patriarchalism and conservatism are seriously eroding the achievements of our struggle for progress, attainment of gender equality and the emancipation of our societies. The most flagrant examples are reflected in the violation of workers' and social rights, reproductive freedoms, including the termination of unwanted pregnancy, as well as in the slow socio-legal measures to tackle violence against women. **Gender parity in political and economic decision-making has not been reached.***

5 ***Our parties, which politically and ideologically, in their basic tenets/postulates/principles of politics, stand for human rights, social justice and emancipation of women and gender equality, cannot allow this kind of developments. Changes should start from ourselves and we should not allow ourselves to be derailed, split and defragmented! We should deliberately and through targeted policies and action push for:***

1. Strengthening the rule of law and respect for women's rights as fundamental human rights:

- ♀ *encouraging by all means measures to combat violence against women*
- ♀ *giving women the right to decide about their body and procreation*
- ♀ *implementing a gender-sensitive active employment policy, to defend workers' rights and take measures against the unemployment of women, including the elimination of the pay gap between women and men*

2. Strengthening democracy and gender equality within the socialist, social democratic and progressive forces, parties and their policies through:

- ♀ *gender parity in party bodies, electoral lists (with the use of quotas to achieve a ratio of 50/50 to 2020)*
- ♀ *gender-sensitive political platforms and decisions, as well as adequate capacity building for party cadres for policy implementation*

♀ *allocation of adequate financial resources for party work in promoting gender equality in all spheres of life.*

Finally, as social-democratic women, social democrats, progressive and democratic forces we declare:

♀ *We will not live in poverty and autocracy!*

♀ *The rule of law, social justice and equality between women and men are the guarantees of democracy and progress!*

We shall fight and take action for these advanced goals and policies within the party and the government, lead and collaborate with other progressive social movement.



Adendum to Gender Equality Platform

TOPIC 1: Transformative Politics – Women in Politics and Political Parties	
Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
<p>SD parties in the region should, whether in election or governing mode:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforce their fundamental societal role, • renew the socialdemocratic principles • develop a new ideological and political paradigm and societal compact true to the principles of social democracy 	<p>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</p>
<p>Political parties in the region should also work on their internal democracy and develop new forms of communication with the society</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>In depth statistical data about women in SD parties needs more systematic tracking to inform analysis and action.</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>The autonomy of women’s forums, as well as youth forums, within parties should be supported</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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 foe enhanced communication.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

TOPIC 2: Women and Labour Policies	
Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
<p>Assuming positions on employment and social policies implies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>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</p>
<p>Reconciling work and life policies cuts across employment policies, social welfare systems and gender equality action.</p>	<p>Social-democratic governments and their left coalitions should strive to formulate cross-sectoral, integrated and consistent policy packages.</p>
<p>Employment policies need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	<p>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>

Specific recommendations:

- i. revise labour laws from the perspective of protection of women's labour right;
- ii. establish special employment policies for the vulnerable women groups who have difficulties in finding employment;
- iii. provide incentives for men to enter "traditionally women's professions" e.g. in health, education, care economy and labour accessibility;
- 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;
- 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;
- vi. change and amend legal regulation stipulating gender equality and its harmonization with European legislation and enforce implementation;
- vii. support PES and PES Women in the campaign to reduce the pay gap between men and women;
- viii. strengthen cooperation with TUs.

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.



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.
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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
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>

TOPIC 6: Conservative Politics and Gender Equality

Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>

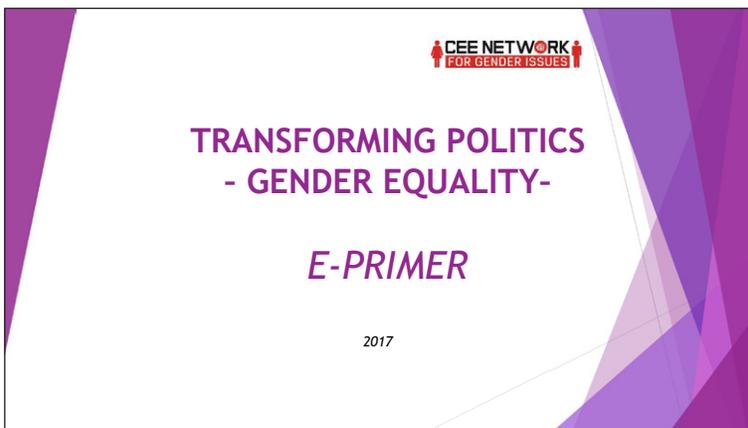
<p>Demographic and population policies should not fog gender equality concerns and be formulated at the expenses of women and their rights</p>	<p>The infiltration of conservative, clerical, right wing and patriarchal forces in all walks of life are advocating the return to the three Ks for women – küche, kinder, kirche</p>
<p>It is a woman’s human right to decide when she will have children</p>	<p>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>
<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 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 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 Education: sexual education and information, life long education and professional opportunities adapted to the changing marketplace 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>	<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</p>

TOPIC 7: Regional Development, Peace, Stability and Cooperation	
Position/Recommendation	Argument/Comment
<p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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”</p>	<p>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?</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Trade unions seem to have been marginalised while traditional well protected workers used to be key constituency for trade unions and social-democratic parties</p>	<p>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?</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>



E-Primer



Transforming Politics through a Gender Lens

AUTHOR:

Daša Šašić Šilović

EDITOR:

Lovorka Marinović

LAYOUT:

Nebojša Martić

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**When a woman enters politics
– She changes.**

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– Politics changes.**

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E-mail: ceegendernet@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CeeGenderNetwork>

Twitter: [@CEEGENDERNET](https://twitter.com/CEEGENDERNET)

Blog: <https://ceegendernetnetwork.wordpress.com>