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2021 Korčula School Think Tank

Korčula, 27-29 August 2021

– Transforming Politics through a Gender lens –

“Recover, Restart, Retool 2021” - Crosscutting topic: Rethinking Gender Equality

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Disclaimer: This report has been prepared by the CEE Network for Gender Issues and represents its own rendition of the discussions. The videos from the sessions can be found at <https://ceegendernetwork.eu> and YouTube

Introduction

The Korčula School Think Tank gathers women and men leaders from South Eastern Europe and beyond to discuss political, economic, social and cultural aspects of gender equality, as well as women's political leadership in the broader context of social democratic and progressive politics. The School, which is held annually, has become a recognised think tank due to its innovative, open, progressive, substantive and gender disaggregated approach to equality, democracy, human rights, social justice and overall transformative politics. It has been fashioned on the concept and experience of the "Korčula School" of the 1960s.¹

The 2021 Korčula School Think Tank was organised with the support of the Olof Palme International Center and in cooperation with PES/PES Women, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), SOLIDAR, FES, the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. It has been one of the precursor events to the Global Progressive Forum (November 2021) organised by the S&D Group/GPF in the European Parliament.

The 2021 Korčula School reviewed the developments since its session in 2020 and discussed the longer-term strategies to build a more sustainable, resilient, socially just and equitable model of recovery and to promote gender equality.

Over seventy participants from socialdemocratic parties and foundations from the Western Balkans and the EU discussed issues of a post-pandemic just transition, the EU Green Deal strategy, and challenges of climate change, inclusive and gender sensitive cities, a new care deal to address inequalities, retooling gender equality and gender budgeting trainings, structural change and reforms, regional trends and programming for gender equality with socialdemocratic parties in the region.

There were two special sessions: on regional political developments and the challenges faced by progressive and socialdemocratic forces internally and externally and on gender equality programming. The session on socialdemocratic women's forums was related to a project that the CEE Network for Gender Issues is working on with FEPS. Both were closed sessions and not livestreamed.

Three training sessions were held – on just transition (SOLIDAR)²; re-tooling gender equality – Putting words into action & improving political culture (PESW)³; channeling resources into women's rights: gender budgeting as a method to address gender inequalities (FEPS)⁴.

The 2021 Korčula School Think Tank was opened by Pedja Grbin, President of the Socialdemocratic Party of Croatia, Zita Gurmai, President of PES Women, the Mayor of Korčula Nika Silić Maroević and the CEE Gender Network Chair, Dasa Šašić Šilović.

¹ The **Praxis school** was a **Marxist humanist** philosophical movement, whose members were influenced by **Western Marxism**.^[1] It originated in **Zagreb** and **Belgrade** in the **SFR Yugoslavia**, during the 1960s..Prominent figures among the school's founders include **Gajo Petrović** and **Milan Kangrga** of Zagreb and **Mihailo Marković** of Belgrade. From 1964 to 1974 they published the **Marxist** journal *Praxis*, which was renowned as one of the leading international journals in **Marxist theory**. The group also organized the widely popular **Korčula Summer School** in the island of **Korčula**. [Praxis School - Wikipedia](#)

² Andrea Casimenti

³ Katja Ziska and Louise Olander

⁴ Nilufer Cagatay, Marion Böker, Janet Veitch

BLOCK I: Restarting: Strategy for a Just Transition

Partnership – CEE Gender Network & SOLIDAR⁵ & FES

Roundtable I - Just Transition – challenges and opportunities (*Training Module - Just Transition: the what and the how*)

The concept, objective, and panellists

The starting premise to trigger off the discussion was that to counter the climate and environmental emergency, structural changes to our economies and to the ways we live, produce, consume, travel and work are necessary and urgent. Such restructuring should address the current social inequalities and economic disbalances for a more just, socially responsible, and sustainable world of the twenty-first century.

Climate change and environmental policies are part and parcel of the broader strategy to address social injustice and inequalities for a sustainable world of the 21st century. Participants were given three guiding questions: How do we combine environmental and social justice? What would make the transition to climate-neutral societies a just, fair, and inclusive one? What tools and political will are required to achieve this?

The introduction to the discussion was given by Mikael Leyi (General Secretary, SOLIDAR (ZOOM), while the moderator was Pia Locatelli (International Secretary, PS Italy, Honorary President SIW, Member International Board, CEE Network for Gender Issues), with the participation of Jovana Trenčevska, Director of State Labour Inspectorate, Member SDUM Women’s Forum Executive; Goran Radosavljević, Director FEFA Institute, Belgrade, Vice President Social Democratic Party of Serbia and Rada Borić, MP, Member City Assembly Zagreb, Croatia (ZOOM).

Key messages from the discussion

Tackling the issue of climate change and a just transition to sustainability and equality is the grand narrative of a generation. The climate and environmental crisis are manmade and demand urgent and strategic responses. There is no time to waste and be complacent about the need for urgent, and even radical, structural changes to our economies and the ways we live and produce, i.e. for a more just, equal, gender sensitive and resilient world. Women, marginalised and poor people are disproportionately affected.

The progressive and social democratic movement has been in the forefront in policy and strategy development.

Social and civil society dialogue is indispensable for bringing together good practices, solutions activities. The scope of discussion among CSOs at the European level is enormous. They should continue to lead this debate and structural change advocating for an integral package since currently there is not enough “green” in the social and not enough social in

This is our time as progressives. It is a chance and an opportunity. Policies discussed today at UN level reflect our language and our policies. We need to rally together, partner with others to implement these policies. Change is coming whether we like it or not but the issue of how strategic and profound it will be depends on us. (Mikael Leyi, General Secretary SOLIDAR)

⁵ **Roundtable I** “- Just Transition – challenges and opportunities” and the *Training Module* “-Just Transition: the what and the how” was organized by the CEE Network for Gender Issues in cooperation with and through the financial support of SOLIDAR. CEE Gender Network is a member of the SOLIDAR family.

the “green”. As a result, SOLIDAR and its partners have established a European Alliance for a Just Transition.⁶

The complexity of the issue demands a multifaceted approach to formulate a comprehensive response at the individual and social level. We are dealing with a triple response: climate change, social justice, digital revolution. In this gender sensitive responses are important. Strategies should be well financed, especially to support citizens that are most vulnerable. A monitoring system should be put in place with indicators and disaggregated statistics.

Feminisation of climate change is a national and international issue which needs to be high on the agenda of national and international efforts. Women are unequal in decision-making; they do not have equal opportunities as men to adapt to climate change and lack equal capacities to address it. As a result, they are not becoming important equal agents of change and transition. Overall, current strategies fall short of recognizing the impact of the crisis on different strata of the population.

It is fundamental to tackle the climate crisis and inequality overall, but especially gender equality. It is much harder for women to reclaim their positions after climate disasters which result in rising violence against women (VAW), a higher risk of dying in natural disasters especially among the marginalised and the poor, increased risk of trafficking, rise of infectious diseases, lack of water, less political influence and participation in decision-making. Some solutions lie in more women in traditional green sectors (energy efficiency, sustainable transport which are mostly male), promotion of work life balance, fighting VAW in the workplace, ensuring the centrality of the care sector in the green economy; the involvement of social NGOs in the climate action discussion (bridging the gap between the discussions on the environment and gender equality).

In the **Western Balkans (WB)** it seems that the transition has been halted. In the period from 2000 to 2012 in the WB countries there was progress - not only in terms of GDP. There was an increase of 136% in the median wage in a decade. From 2012 to 2020 wage increases were three times slower. On an average, wages in the WB represent 48% of the average Western European wage. The population in the Western Balkans is the poorest in Europe. Most of the population does not see the benefits of transition. EBRD reports that only 60% of the population has knowledge and awareness of climate change, while cities and towns are suffering from pollution and there are ten thermal electricity plants in the WB.

The WB are today at the level of basic needs. If the region does not join the EU soon it will remain a problematic European “black hole”. Today it is stuck in the transition and only a few avenues are opening. The solution lies in three areas: EU integration, EU integration, EU integration. Any external resources, for instance, from the IMF or the EU require mechanisms to be put in place for strategic use and transparency in a situation where institutions in the WB have been weakened and are the victims of the transition. The region cannot wait any more to join the EU – hope is lost, and attention is diverted to other areas. This should be a priority for the progressives and social democrats.

Actions taken by the progressive socialdemocratic Government of North Macedonia in the last five years were featured in the discussion as a good practice- the institutional and legal framework; significant efforts to highlight the connection between gender equality and climate change. Gender responsive climate change policies were developed with concrete activities and timelines. These are part of the strategic goals spelled out in the national development strategy with developed indicators; the integration

⁶ [Solidar - Advancing Social Justice In Europe and Worldwide](#)

of the gender aspect into the climate change mitigation effort including the social aspect. This was broadly supported by the civil society. The Ministry of the Economy adopted an amendment a program for renewable resources. A call in 2020 was published to address household vulnerabilities, the socially endangered population, for assistance and social protection. One of the biggest problems is the development of intersectional policies, disaggregating data and developing indicators for climate change.

The two crisis – the 2008 economic crisis and now the COVID 19 crisis have demonstrated that again women are the collateral victims. In the 2008 crisis social care, in Croatia for example, was transferred into the households. In the region women are losers of the transition overall, for instance “women’s” industries were the first to be disbanded in the privatisation.

The region remains a bastion of patriarchy and right-wing parties who do not want change which renders the discussion on gender equality and the environment difficult. For them strengthening patriarchy is an objective for instance through demographic measures. A just transition implies, especially in the WB, a confrontation with this right-wing politics, strategies for change and the tools available to foment change. Until the progressives and the left come to power there will be no change. But efforts could currently focus on the local level, where change is possible as demonstrated at the last local elections in Croatia whereby the island of Korčula is now governed by the progressives, independents, and social democrats – it is “a HDZ (demochristian) free zone”. Regaining the trust of citizens and voters for change and going “green”, for a socially just and digital transition, is the biggest challenge for the progressives and the left.

To bring the discussion into a more concrete perspective SOLIDAR introduced their training programme, developed with the Olof Palme International Center, on just transition. The training module highlights the inter-connectedness of just transition components and includes the gender equality perspective.

From the discussion: Processes of digitalization vs that of the just transition. We are experiencing a qualitative and quantitative jump into digitalisation. But the aftermath of this has shown that the richer get richer, the poorer get poorer and the marginalised remain marginalised. How do we ensure that all will benefit from this and not just the elites?

Roundtable II - Green Deal and Sustainable Development – the strategy⁷

The concept, objective, and panellists

Vulnerability to future crises will depend on the degree and scope of the recovery. The EU is committed to strong solidarity between the EU and the Western Balkans especially in addressing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the region. The recovery needs to ensure that we build forward better, re-seize the momentum of the SDGs giving priority to cross-sectoral and regional action, including a mainstreamed approach to gender equality. As these countries work towards meeting the criteria for EU membership, reforms should align with the EU Green Deal, the Digital Strategy, and the European Pillar of Social Rights. This strategy goes hand-in hand with the broader pan-European discussions on the future of Europe. Guiding question: Where are we with this process? Do the Western Balkans have the same strategies and how are they, or not, coordinated?

Introductory remarks were made by Maria João Rodrigues, President FEPS, the roundtable was moderated by Sonja Schirmbeck, Director, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Zagreb with the participation of Kata Tüttö, Deputy Mayor Budapest and Vice President PES Committee of Regions (ZOOM), Marta Szigeti Bonifert, former Executive Director REC, Board member The European Partners for the Environment and the CEE Gender Network, Nataša Vučković, Executive Director, Center for Democracy Foundation, Zefi Dimadama, Lecturer Panteion University, Vice President PESW PESW (ZOOM), Irina Lazzarini, Sustainable Energy Expert, Energy Community Secretariat (ZOOM) and Raymond van Ermen, Executive Director, European Partners for the Environment (ZOOM).

Key messages from the discussion

Recovering and retooling is the challenge as we enter a crucial period which demands that we deal with the environmental crisis and at the same time assume ownership of the second current – the digital transition, as well as to tackle inequalities. The recovery strategy remains in silos without an integrated perspective on environmental, economic, and social policies. It is not possible to have a sustainable industrial strategy without a circular economy.

The environmental crisis is global. This is an opportunity for us to cope with climate change, implement the Green Deal, take hold of the digital transformation, and put the EU Social Pillar in motion. The Green Deal is welcome, but it seems to be a missed opportunity for full change and transformation of our societies and economies and it is gender blind. Its implementation might lead to even more inequality which warrants focus on housing conditions, transport choices with new opportunities for quality jobs. Labour rights and corresponding working conditions should be respected in this transition to the “green” and digital economy where many are working in vital sectors such as services and increasingly teleworking. The Social Pillar – for all citizens of the EU and its action plan adopted at the EU Porto Summit are there to implement and tackle social inequalities.

Faced with these new challenges, the COVID-19 crisis has challenged our capacity for very rapid changes in “economic and financial models” as well as in social and individual behaviour. It has also upset the ‘hierarchies’ in public opinion. Looking forward to other potential crises that await us, we have learnt that solidarity is the *conditio sine qua non* for resilience. Basically, this unique dramatic and collective pandemic experience has heightened the importance of solidarity and the value of a feminist society.

⁷ Roundtable II - Green Deal and Sustainable Development – the strategy discussion was organised by the CEE Network for Gender Issues and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) in Croatia and Slovenia

Building on these new experiences' solidarity is important. But this "solidarity" must be organised around common goods, be systemic and be part of a "value chain" within a multi-actor partnership that is not limited to borders and mandates.

A much bigger EU budget should be based on mutual solidarity so that all states can prepare their recovery plans. In the field of monitoring the commitments of each one, the blockchain opens the way to new methods of contracts and management of "common goods" and the funds allocated to their valuation and conservation, building the basis of a "digital democracy". This will be one of the objectives of this alliance between the new technology and societal innovation.

The challenges of the 21st century warrant that Europe transforms itself through policies and instruments capable of facing the challenges of interdependent environmental risks inherent within "planetary limits" and by addressing the impact that inequalities impose on society and citizens, at European and global level. This is imperative for Europe to be able to withstand the shocks to come and build a better resilient and sustainable future.

Over the past 50 years, international conventions (climate, biodiversity, access to information), treaties on the objectives of the EU, its values and fundamental rights, the Social Pillar have advanced humanity in its quest for resilience and sustainability.⁸ But all this is implemented much too slowly. We are overtaken by catastrophes and tragedies witnessing the lack of proactivity. Worse still, key frameworks for the future such as the post-Covid recovery strategies of certain countries and the new European Council-Parliament agreement on the new 'Common Agricultural Policy' will constitute additional obstacles to a necessary transformation. It would be extremely dangerous to ignore the risks of chaos.

The painful experience of 2008 and the impacts in terms of growing inequalities and rising populism are there to remind us. The same is true of the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing dangerous cracks for the social, political, and diplomatic cohesion of Europe and the world.

Thus, the European Green Deal is fixing only a part of the agenda. Surprisingly it is not addressing governance while we must very quickly equip ourselves with new instruments of governance and encouragement of "transformation" for a "leap forward" of Europeans towards greater resilience and well-being. Among other things, they will build on the potential of inclusive management of companies, economy, and finance in the digital age in support of the Green Deal.

It is about moving from a dialogue or multi-stakeholder partnerships to a systemic approach based on digital tools, such as blockchain, for decentralized management. As this key dimension is not addressed by the Green Deal, the Conference on the Future of Europe should address this Green Deal gap and lay the foundations for a 'new social contract' with the management of the commons as the main objective and - echoing the struggles against inequalities and for gender equality - with a central place in the fight against inequalities both globally and within countries.

In this framework, the management of common goods should have a central place alongside the means to fight against inequalities and for gender equality. This management should be eco-systemic and be based on a common technological base, including a blockchain strategy, for transparency, accountability, and the trust of each stakeholder part of the Green Deal.

⁸ Including, legislation on the impact on the environment, access to information and justice, court rulings on climate, air and water, initiative referendums, changes in practice by part of the business and financial world, the creation of a 'market for sustainable products, technologies, services', the Green Deal, etc.

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The EU has a gender equality strategy but the reality and financing for its implementation does not guarantee success raising the issue of how the EU Green Deal will be able to support gender equality, how the transformation will affect women and men, and how gender equality will be mainstreamed especially in recovery and resilience. Without adequate gender assessments, measurements and a focus on gender sensitive outcomes raises the question of whether it will be possible to close gender gaps, or will we exacerbate them? Working with mayors and local representatives to initiate gender sensitive budgeting and to collect gender sensitive data is one of the tools. For instance, the EU has a soft gender assessment criterion on impact – it is just as a recommendation to member states.

The energy crisis, as well as energy prices that are skyrocketing can further exacerbate poverty levels especially among women especially single mothers, pensioners where poverty already exists. When we speak about green jobs, we do scrutinize the distribution of resources– mostly to male dominated sectors like construction works and energy.

All this poses a **challenge for the progressives** – how to use this opportunity, switch our economies to full decarbonization, ensure that the transition process fosters equality including that it should be gender sensitive and inclusive. These policies should be packed into a consolidated effort to support democracy and the rule of law in Europe. In this process the European Committee of Regions is adding the voice of citizens and cities.

Building up fortresses and fostering exclusion is a dangerous game so prevalent in the region.

For the Western Balkans (WB) the EU integration and the timeframe for integration are very important. The region is very much behind the EU accession process. Moreover, it seems that the Green Deal is not an important issue in the accession discussions and the region remains behind the timeframe for accession and in the negotiations. The negative messages from the EU are also confusing for the public and do not encourage countries to go forward.

Regional cooperation is necessary but unfortunately regional leaders address regional cooperation as something mandated by the EU. This also applies to other reforms too. The narrative should be cognizant of this to push for a real interface among WB countries, for instance on issues such as COVID 19 vaccines. Confidence building is very important in this. Socialdemocratic and socialist parties should be more forceful in the demands for accession and strengthening of the EU. Paradoxically there may be a providential opening - the process of slowing down accession to the EU may result in more regional cooperation and understanding among states.

At the same time the EU has given financial support to WB countries e.g., the investment plan which also addresses the Green Deal. But it also hinges on progress in regional cooperation within the Berlin process and its different facets. The European climate law demands more effort in the WB and the Mediterranean as protagonists. This demands the EU to devote more policies and divert more finances and investments into the Mediterranean, a case in point were summer 2021 fires in Greece. Regional leaders sign all sorts of agreements with the EU including relating to the Green Deal but since there is no implementation it ends up being a profitable window dressing for them. At the same time there is a weak push for government transparency in the use of EU funds for recovery.

The crucial problems of pollution, decarbonization, waste management, safeguarding natural resources in the WB is far behind European standards, although North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Albania have adopted climate laws. The governments in the region are also, for their own political purposes, promoting the dilemma - development or climate change or development versus environmental protection! Governments advocate for this concept because of foreign investments which are often conflicting with the climate change and environmental goals. It should not be forgotten that foreign investments go often beyond new jobs and economic gain and end up in corruption. This is a question which needs to be resolved between the EU and the governments in the region, as well as to become the basis in the discussion around foreign investments.

The enlargement process pays little attention to the social dimension which is for many reasons left on the margins and will seriously impede a socially just transition including regarding gender equality. Women as decision makers and local communities need to have an important role in this discussion which is currently not bottom up. But more advocacy and capacity building should be undertaken so that women are part of policies to address climate change, the energy crisis, to engender procurement policies and promote gender disaggregated planning. Financing women for the recovery plan demands gender specific criteria, as well as specific customized criteria for different communities.

From the perspective of progressive narratives on climate change and the Green Deal there is the danger that the discussion is perceived by the citizens as an elitist project. Many actors of change at local and rural levels for example, among them women, are left out of this discussion. What messaging on the Green Deal can be given to people living in poverty, for instance the Roma who are living in unhygienic conditions in slums without sewage and running water. There is no strategy to address this.

Investments are made in the political dialogue among governments, broader societal discussions are lacking, let alone an inter-generational dialogue as young people suffer from lack of opportunities and employment. Investing in people and new skills does not seem to be of priority concern but no transition will be possible without it. There are new emerging skills in the digital sphere. Many women's jobs (back office) will phase out, people will also need the skill to follow emerging trends. Social and emotional skills which surfaced during the pandemic relate to adaptability and resilience. Digitalization should be focused on agricultural policies also including water protection.

Engagement with youth is very important because of the big gap between highly educated young people who are part of the process of digitalization and the big army of young people who are left out of the digital revolution and who are unemployed, in some societies up to 20-25%. Education levels are slipping in the pandemic heightening inequalities among children in terms of digital capacities and even food. Of course, the gender mainstreaming challenges exist.

In the absence of democracy and democratic institutions in some of the WB countries, where the state power is exponentially growing to the benefit of ruling parties and at the expense of democracy, implementation of environmental "green" policies is a challenge because the thrust is on fast financial gain and not on sustainable development. In those circumstance the challenge is promoting decentralization as local communities like on the Korčula island are more nimble and able to deal with environmental, climate, unemployment and other challenges. There are many good examples to be harvested in this direction. Cities and municipalities would be able to tackle these problems if they were directly funded by the state.

Some solutions lie in including women in traditional green sectors (energy efficiency, sustainable transport which are mostly male), promotion of work life balance, fighting VAW in the workplace,

ensuring centrality of the care sector in the green economy; the involvement of social NGOs in the climate action discussion (bridging the gap between the discussions on the environment and gender equality).

Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was the follow up of a UN conference on related guidelines which took place in Sofia, here in the Balkans after an NGO preparatory meeting in Croatia. Member States and the Conference on the Future of Europe representatives should be encouraged to give special attention to this double paradigm shift since in March 2020, the European Council made resilience to crises and shocks a major objective of the EU.

Roundtable III - Inclusive and gender sensitive cities

The concept, objective, and panellists

Building resilient and sustainable societies focusing on the regional and local is key to success. The discussion will aim to show how cities and regions implement the SDGs in a post-pandemic Europe and the region. Traditional city design and planning often fail to recognize the complex and unequal relations between women and men in society. All citizens should have a representative voice in governance, planning, and budgeting processes and, as the pandemic demonstrated, human security in cities will be one of the key elements to focus on. Guiding questions: Is there any good practice in city inclusiveness? Human security in cities is a concern, how does it relate to women? Are urban solutions gender sensitive?

Introductory remarks were made by Kata Tüttö, Deputy Mayor of Budapest and Vice President PES Committee of Regions, the roundtable was moderated by Nataša Milojević, President FOSDI, Serbia with the participation of Benjamina Karić, Mayor of Sarajevo (ZOOM) and Nika Silić Maroević, Mayor of Korčula Town.

Key messages from the discussion

The moderator reminded the participants that the first Korčula School was held for two weeks in 1963. It was organised in a tourist camp. This is the tenth anniversary of the Korčula School organised by the CEE Network for Gender Issues. It highlights our rights and responsibility to critical thought and opens the continuity of Mediterranean thought as a Mediterranean tradition in Korčula.

The session analysed the concept of inclusive and gender sensitive cities and good practices. Inclusiveness means citizens have a say in the planning, management, and financing of their city in a manner that ensures sustainability and people centred responses. Inclusive, smart, creative and gender sensitive cities mean an appropriate management of human capital and resources to fit sustainability and participatory democracy criteria. This is particularly important since the projections are that 60% of the world population will live in cities soon. This is local, national, European, and global challenge.

“When it is difficult give the job to women” often happens in city administrations. The current crisis has unearthed the core, that is the tacit understanding that all is well. For a long time, people were blind to these issues. Provoked by the crisis people in Korčula started talking about real problems and how the city functions. For instance, the town has developed a communal webpage to test the interests of citizens on how transport is organised in the town. Surprisingly people engaged enormously. But to get the right answers one needs to ask the right questions that would also contribute to changing peoples’ perceptions on this issue and start changing the solutions.

In Korčula by electing the left they expressed the hope for change to be led by a woman mayor after the practice of a “male ruler”. Today the city government is mostly made up of women ready to take up the challenge, to be sometimes brutally frank and courageous and practice a new way of working and thinking. No ways of working are given forever. Quick wins mean putting out “fires” but doing so strategically and persistently, for instance resolving the traffic problems which ail every Dalmatian city. It is important to start resolving crucial and key problems that bother citizens promptly and with quick solutions. For politicians it is important to maintain personal integrity irrespective of how difficult the issue is. There is always enough space for making decisions which will not go against the interests of citizens and public goods. But one needs to understand all the different perspectives and find the most beneficial solution for all citizens.

Sarajevo is by virtue an inclusive city as is its city council. But also, there are deliberate efforts to make it so. This is the second woman mayor in Sarajevo. The Sarajevo city administration has parity between women and men. In the city council – the Sarajevo mayor has seven assistants and five are women. It supports the “safe house” against violence against women.

Citizens should be the focus of decision making. Projects that the city undertakes need to conform to key principles of sustainability and environmental protection. For Sarajevo it is important to safeguard the environment but at the same time to develop tourism and industry. While the mayor of Sarajevo has not broad responsibilities, for instance in water and energy management, she can influence decision making on these issues. Sarajevo is, unfortunately, not a “green” city since it has a small number of parks and green recreation spaces.

In most cities women are generally in charge of social issues – culture, tourism, health, education. They are seldom in charge of urban planning and transport for instance. In city councils and regional councils there is a small number of women members and when they are there, they get less prominent positions and do not work on most important issues. How much risk can women take when they assume the key functions in cities? Being frank cannot be a problem, one needs to be patient and not be afraid of truth. Lies do not work especially when you manage public resources.

It is necessary to constantly rethink the way cities are organised and function. The issue of personal safety and security in cities has been heightened by the COVID 19 pandemic. It has had the major impact on the concept of safety and security and is beyond the safety of public spaces and transport. Most of the big cities like Budapest are aligned with the Green Deal and climate goals. They are making efforts to increase the number of users of public transport, to divert people from cars to cycling and walking. However, citizens still do not generally feel safe in public transport. For women important issues are security, safety from violence, land, and real estate ownership.

What does it mean to be a **gender inclusive city** and to have a **gender lens in cities**? Most cities were designed by men for men to fit their needs. Vienna is a twin city of Budapest. It provides a good example. It has started monitoring data on how citizens are using their city. Most men drive cars, and the city infrastructure was built to accommodate this. Women on the other hand make many trips during the day – from taking children to school to visiting their parents, shopping etc. As a result of this research Vienna started redesigning the pavement for walking, introduced more streetlights, redesigned well-lit underpasses. In terms of green jobs there are many examples of how cities are promoting for instance driver jobs for women – in Budapest 40% women are metro drivers.

Gender urban planning in Vienna was also looking at how parks are used. They discovered that girls after the age of nine did not use parks as much as the boys since it did not cater for their interests. They changed the space, included more benches and sports spaces. Women also redesigned a part of Vienna for women along the concept of “15-minute cities”. Accessible, affordable and a good public transport network is important which also includes investments.

Digitalisation – smart cities are the order of the day. Budapest has good quality of water. A lot of work is done on air pollution and data collection on air quality. Using technology is important when you want to include citizens in decision making, e.g. participatory budgeting whereby there is a platform in Budapest for citizens to participate. Digital tools are helpful in the city management.

In Croatia participation of citizens in municipal decision making remains on paper but not in practice. The city of Rijeka however represents good practice. While some budgeting does have some gender sensitive elements, there is still no awareness of gender sensitive budgeting and implementation falls short. But municipal budgeting should go beyond gender sensitive budgeting and be more disaggregated to

encompass all strata of the population like the elderly and the handicapped, the needs of young people. Cities like Budapest are ageing with an increasing number of people over 65 who have different needs. Generally, gender sensitive budgeting in Croatia means budgeting for mothers as a measure to boost birth rates.

Citizen's initiatives are very important and politics and local politics should listen to citizen voices. The participation of citizens in local elections is commensurate to their perception of the extent to which they can influence city management. In Croatia the law was changed regarding local management to include the introduction of citizens' assemblies. They can also be convened by the local government or mayor. Hence this participatory instrument exists but it remains to be seen how citizens will make use of this possibility.

Civil society is a very important factor in the management of local communities, but nobody tracks its impact on municipal decision making. For inclusive cities to function more civic education especially among the young is necessary, especially in secondary schools. There is also the need to break up the perception that all politics is bad and corrupt and to develop more trust among citizens.

The planning and management of cities (infrastructure, resources), especially in the region, is prone to **corruption**. This is a political and social democratic political and ethical issue in an environment where resource management is dominated by liberal capitalism. One cannot talk about equality, inclusiveness, and solidarity without tackling the issue of corruption which is not only material or financial but engrained in "corruptive thinking" and service provision. Trading in services is one of the most frequent forms of non-financial corruption. There is a lot of verbal corruption which is difficult to track. Financial and management corruption can be tracked but the verbal one is invisible, and people do not report it. Is corruption when the ferry attendant lets you in without paying the ticket? Perceptions and behaviour patterns are more difficult to redress. It needs a democratic, transparent environment and trustworthy politicians and decision makers.

BLOCK I: Accelerating History for Just and Sustainable Development⁹

Plenary - Forging a new care deal to address inequalities – care economy as a cross-cutting issue

The concept, objective, and panellists

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has blatantly exposed the vulnerability of Europe's (health) care and welfare systems. They were already under increasing pressure not least due to societal and demographic change but because of the severe lack of societal and political values placed on care despite its undeniably essential role for any society to survive. The discussion focused on how care inequalities are a complex but crucial phenomenon deeply interconnected with gender, demographic and regional inequalities calling for progressive answers. Guiding questions: In the light of the ever more mobile nature of Europe, how can the EU ensure a fair balance between the migration care chains from Eastern and Central Europe on the one hand, and Western Europe's reliance on this workforce to keep its care system afloat? How does care work lie at the intersection of gender, class, and migration? What are the necessary measures to bring about a quality, people-focused care deal?

The session was opened by László Andor, FEPS Secretary General and Dasa Šašić Šilović, Chair CEE Network for Gender Issues, President European Partners for the Environment. The session was moderated by Laetitia Thissen, Policy Analyst for Gender Equality (ZOOM). The issues further discussed were on dependency on east-to-west care labour migration in Europe, Elena Zacharenko, Doctoral Researcher on care and social reproduction, East-West migration and gender equality policies in the EU (ZOOM) and on regional perspectives on inequality and the care economy, Ana Čupeska Assistant Professor, North Macedonia, Member of the FEPS Scientific Council (ZOOM) and labour and inequalities, Zoran Stojiljkovic, President Trade Union "Independence", professor Faculty of Political Sciences, Belgrade (ZOOM).

Key messages from the discussion

The COVID 19 crisis is a turning point from the gender perspective. We run the risk of a slow burning crisis turning into a fast-developing crisis – imbalances that may lead to a sort of breakdown. We have been facing developments which are highlighting the risks if we do not address gender equality.

In the previous decades we went through an experience where public investments have been under constant pressures. The existing economic and financial structures resulted in a state of constant crisis. The rising demand for health and other social services underscored the pressures and needs for lacking investments in health and the care economy, highlighted by the Covid pandemic.

The increased pressures on the labour market due to the development of the gig-economy and technology created a new environment creating avenues to question the stability of employment, wage structures and

⁹ BLOCK I: Accelerating History for Just and Sustainable Development: Plenary - Forging a new care deal to address inequalities – care economy as a cross-cutting issue discussion was organized by the CEE Network for Gender Issues and FEPS within a joint project on the Korčula School.

social security. It has been a sector without unionisation and collective bargaining. Since the great financial crisis there has been a lot of job growth - in the EU about $\frac{3}{4}$ of new jobs were created around the gig-economy and new forms of jobs. The Covid 19 crisis gave an additional boost to the gig-economy with most work centred to delivery through a platform and not the conventional way. In this environment the power of employees is challenged, creating potentially a very acute economic and social crisis ill adapted to this change.

The Covid pandemic also created a crisis of mobility in the East-West context. The EU offers free movement not only for goods and services but also for labour. More and more women were labour migrants because of the care sector for instance, especially in the Western countries that have been employing women as care providers and working in the service sector. As the Covid 19 shock paralysed cross-border mobility it created a crisis of income which was disappearing for those who had a certain degree of stability before secured by the EU. While it was a necessity to bring workers for Romania to the Netherlands, for instance, labour standards were not enforced leaving those European East-West migrant workers without health and social protection.

There are policy answers and a directive to address this situation: efforts to make the EU more investment friendly; rules of fiscal policy and economic governance need to be revised which has also the gender aspects; fiscal regulation; a regulatory agenda on employment which has a specific element – directive for the minimum wage which affects more women. The success of this directive will have strong implications for the gender gap. The concept of the health union is important to redress the East-West mobility. It also needs to ensure the capacities are maintained in different countries on a comparable level. This should be upheld by the EU Pillar on Social Rights and its action plan. This was also discussed at the EU Social Summit in Porto which also included gender elements such as pay transparency.

The FEPS has included the care crisis and a feminist society in its analysis of the situation. The EU needs to tackle inequalities in general, but it should not let that the EU gender equality strategy become a marginal one. The targets developed by the EU to track and measure progress on the gender pay and employment gaps means more accountability for EU members and institutions. In the long term it will be important to ensure that gender equality is on the agenda of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Mobility of the labour force is also on the agenda in the Western Balkans whether it is seasonal workers or general filling out the gaps in certain professions like construction and the care economy which especially affects women. The CEE Network for Gender Issues has organised a discussion on this issue at the 2019 Korčula School. The review showed the lack of regulation and protection of regional migrant labour, especially the seasonal one. But the shortage of certain professions is now being clearly visible throughout the region. Workers, especially in sectors like health, the care economy, construction and even professionals with high levels of expertise like doctors, architects and engineers are moving to the West making it necessary for countries in the region to import workers from other parts of the world. The impact of this migration is devastating as hospitals are left without staffing, the construction industry without workers, brain-drain is becoming a practice. Asked what they want to do after they leave school, secondary school students are opting from moving to the West.

How can progressive forces forge a new political thrust to address the care economy crisis, the lack of societal and political values in solutions to resolve the issue of the care economy and the gender, demography and economic aspects of the situation?

Europe has developed a dependency on East-West labour migration. Care providers, particularly women, are often live-in in the households and are perpetuating a model of long term. Care is particularly provided by migrant women from Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania. Labour standards are not honoured in this sector and there is a high dependency on the individual employer. Long working hours and this sector are often unregulated. The entire care system in certain EU countries depends enormously on Eastern European care workers, e.g., Germany. Demographic decline needs more people of working age. There is a discrepancy between the care needs and care provided by the state and therefore it is a burden on the households which must find their own solutions. Many states have encouraged the purchase of care services on the market, for instance cash for care schemes like in Austria.

There has also been a lack of political will to address this multifaceted practice. The issue of economic inequalities among EU member states fosters this type of migration of care workers. Wealthier states can cut costs on the care sector by employing cheap labour from the East and by not providing for these people to join the national safety nets. There is a lack of comprehensive EU policy on living care work. The definition of rules is open to placement agencies on the working conditions. These apply fees and further reduce the already low pay and contribute to the perpetuation of this situation. It is quite difficult for trade unions to organize care workers which are often hard to reach, the membership fees may be too high, care workers also do not generally speak the language.

Recommendations could encompass¹⁰:

- Investment of resources in care provision through increased budgetary commitments: increase funding for health care and long-term care to provide those who need it with access to a flexible range of high-quality long-term care services.
- Introduction of systems and registration procedures that make the formalization and regularization of live-in care work attractive and easy for care providers and their employers. This includes encouraging the participation of carers in professional training courses to allow them to professionalize and formalize their skills, funding for the organisation and implementation of such courses and training by both government and non-governmental entities.
- Improvement of working conditions in the labour market overall, especially in predominantly sending countries, and ensuring decent working conditions in the care sector. This includes: increasing the minimum wage and ensuring that wages for part-time workers are in line with the full-time equivalent hourly wage: many of the low-paid professions in care earn minimum wages or just above, which tend to be adjusted upward when national minimum wages increase; reducing the number of hours in the working week for all workers to allow for a better reconciliation of work and caring responsibilities; improving working conditions in public-funded institutional settings by outlining requirements and standards for public procurement; creating jobs in care, as increasing staffing levels can reduce the need for short-notice work and, together with increased professionalization, training and improved processes, can reduce the physical and mental health challenges; - introducing legal provisions that allow live-in carers to join trade unions.
- Introduce measures that improve conditions for migrant care workers in live-in care settings. This includes: ensuring that tripartite bodies and labour inspection authorities are able to fulfil their function of providing quality control for live-in care arrangements; securing and better coverage and compliance with regulations and collective agreements, in particular in the live-in care sector;

¹⁰ Presented by Elena Zacharenko, Doctoral Researcher on care and social reproduction, East-West migration and gender equality policies in the EU. [FESpaper_egyhasabos.indd](https://www.fespaper.org/egyhasabos.indd)

regulating and adequately remunerating the specific working conditions common in live-in care work (long working hours, non-remunerated »stand-by« or travel time, emotional toll); making sure that live-in care workers are not excluded from relevant member state employment-related regulations, including, among other things: proper remuneration, health and safety protection, social security and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining; enabling live-in care workers to become better integrated in the long-term care system and establishing close cooperation with professional, public health and social care systems.

In the long term this would mean:

- Striving for an “economy based on care”, in which all aspects of the economy and social life are directed towards the maintenance of and care for society and individuals. Replace EU level policies aiming to achieve short-term fiscal stability with policies that promote public investment. Incentivize the creation of a universal social care infrastructure, investment in care provisions and valuing the care sector in the EU.
- Encouraging member states to shift away from the 24-hour live-in care model which is unsustainable, depends heavily on the availability of intra-EU and non-EU migrant workers and promotes precarious working conditions. This includes encouraging member state investment in professional public home-based care services available for all; promoting public care provision through assisted living arrangements or in community settings rather than individualized and market-based solutions, such as live-in care.
- Minimising regional economic inequalities between EU member states and introduce measures to mitigate differences in access to care in different EU member states.

The progressive and socialdemocratic Government of North Macedonia is profoundly committed to securing a sustainable welfare agenda, redistributive justice, solidarity. The care economy was a focus of the government both before and during the crisis and continues to be a goal. It includes key measures and mainstreamed gender equality goals. The creation of new jobs and higher salaries, and consequently, employment in the private sector was stimulated for 64,000 people via direct active measures, which also included efforts to raise the minimum wage. The government is working on the adoption of new laws: the labour law; on social entrepreneurship, as well as on a legal solution that will protect employees in case of insolvency of their employer. These seek to reduce the poverty rate to a level below 16%.

The minimal wage in Serbia is a hot topic in the country. This is especially in the focus of trade unions especially in view of the pandemic situation and employment rights. Every form of inequality is correlated to, maintained, and perpetuated by the differences in political power and capital. Political power means the management of resources, transparency and trust by citizens.

It is also an issue of political capital. The lack of management of those holding political power has resulted in the fact that NGOs, socialdemocratic parties, feminists and progressives live in a constant political crisis in the last three decades in Serbia. There is for the time no solution and response. We have been taking égalité, fraternité, solidarité as a given. In Serbia the understanding and the will to practice solidarity does not exist today. A small number of people are interested in these principles. The society is also complacent when it comes to practicing democracy and working towards sustainable development. It seems that authoritarian systems which have managerial/executive capacities and corresponding educational systems are acceptable model. This also implies the lack of trust in TUs and socialdemocratic parties which are in a profound crisis.

The labour market is directly linked to political power. Do we have a defined model of participatory democracy that could be an alternative? As the world population increases how shall we provide jobs in view of technological and digital advances? For instance, what type of labour protection, social provision can be provided for someone who teaches English from Serbia to someone in Korea?

This also relates to the function, status, and space for trade unions in Serbia. Serbia has a hybrid regime with declining democratic standards and with a high level of inequality where a quarter of the population lives beyond the poverty line. And yet Serbia has good GDP outcomes and shows certain economic performance acceptable for foreign investments. The country is in a trap – there is economic growth but no movement on social cohesion and social welfare.

There is a great problem to foster trust among citizens since politics in Serbia is not socially inclusive. If the roots are in the income, economic development, and low wages they need to be addressed through sustainable and progressive taxation policy. This is a perverse and paradoxical situation of big levels of wealth and high levels of poverty. Efforts to promote social dialogue and collective bargaining may be possible solutions as the basis for maintaining social capital. However, this cannot be done in the current system where social transfers are universal without reference to the country economic potential and decreasing working hours. There is also a need to develop the service sector and include unpaid work, especially affecting women. All the rest will be solutions that will not make a difference in the foreseeable ten to fifteen years.

The Case Study of North Macedonia

The progressive and socialdemocratic Government of North Macedonia is profoundly committed to securing a sustainable welfare agenda, redistributive justice, solidarity. The care economy was a focus of the government both before and during the crisis, and continues to be a goal. It includes key measures and mainstreamed gender equality goals.¹¹ The creation of new jobs and higher salaries, and consequently, employment in the private sector was stimulated for 64,000 people via direct active measures, which also included efforts to raise the minimum wage. The government is working on the adoption of new laws: the labour law; on social entrepreneurship, as well as on a legal solution that will protect employees in case of insolvency of their employer. These seek to reduce the poverty rate to a level below 16%.

The Government has also established a functional institutional network for social protection which includes social services for support and palliative care for the elderly; centres for care and inclusion for people with disabilities and housing communities for them, protective services related to gender-based violence and other groups of citizens in need, who are in a situation of social risk. Equally, the concept of the family social worker was introduced, a guaranteed minimum income, a social debit card – solidarity; collectivization of social housing under local self-government; opening of overnight accommodation and food outlets for the homeless.

The pension fund is being stabilized, and a state social pension has been introduced. Single-parent families have possibilities for flexible working hours and there are certain tax exemptions, public transport, and kindergarten, as well as individual support for children from families in the social protection system and low-income families, in order to support families which are at increased risk. The network of professional foster families is being established, and their employment is regulated with

¹¹ Presentation by Ana Chupeska, assistant professor, North Macedonia, Member of the FEPS Scientific Council. See ppt presentation at the <https://ceegendernetwork.eu>

agreements conducted with the state. In terms of persons with special needs there is an improvement in the system of protection and an increasing amount of funds for protection of the rights of persons with special needs by 50% during the mandate period. Many other measures have been introduced to foster the care economy.

Vouchers of up to 100 euros to cover tuition at the Universities as well as accommodation in dormitories and registered accommodation facilities for students and high school students. The measure also includes a payment card for young people worth 50 euros for domestic products and services; cash benefit for all persons who lost their jobs from March 11 to April 30, 2020; interest-free loans for companies through the Development Bank of Northern Macedonia, in the amount of 24 million euros – and especially, support for women, youth and digitalization in business; cash rewards for doctors and medical staff, members of the emergency medical teams, in the amount of 40% of the last net salary base.

The conservative opposition in North Macedonia constantly opposed these measures in Parliament, refused to work on-line in Parliament. The Government has adopted six packages to address the crisis fall-outs. Protection was directed towards: the social care, the economy, direct transfers to citizens including payment cards and vouchers and financial support for certain social strata

These measures have had the following effect which can be of interest for the region:

real growth rates (%)	impact of the measures included (published data from the sso)	without the impact of the measures (counterfactual analysis)	impact (percentage points)
gdp	-4.5	-8.4	3.9
private consumption	-5.6	-11.8	6.2
public consumption	10.1	3.3	6.8
gross investments	-10.2	-11.6	1.4
export of goods and	-10.9	-11.9	1.0

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¹² More on gender equality in North Macedonia: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/skopje/17560-20210318.pdf>