

Women's economic empowerment in the Western Balkans

Challenges and recommendations for a sustainable way forward

WORKING GROUP MEETING 1

WHY, WHAT, WHO?

Friends of Europe's **Balkan Journey** initiative aims to circumvent stagnant debates on enlargement and focus on forward-looking solutions and people-centred priorities. The project seeks to promote new and progressive voices, foster inclusion, strengthen pathways towards regional cooperation, and amplify the voices of underrepresented groups.

For this purpose, our **Working Group on women's economic empowerment in the Western Balkans** has identified the main obstacles that women in the region face in achieving greater development in all aspects of economic life. During its three-year journey, the Working Group will be responsible for tracing and putting together a set of recommendations, with concrete goals, for overcoming the identified challenges.

Over 35 high-level personalities and experts participated in the Working Group's kick-off meeting in Tirana, Albania in April 2022. The meeting was hosted by Erion Veliaj, Mayor of Tirana.



WESTERN BALKAN
NATIONAL AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS



EUROPEAN AND
INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS



CIVIL SOCIETY



ACADEMIA



PRIVATE COMPANIES,
START-UPS AND
ENTERPRISES



MAIN OBSTACLES TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

A GENDERED EDUCATION

A traditional and patriarchal approach to education from a very young age enhances a mindset that prohibits women from enjoying the same opportunities as men.

A WEAK CARE ECONOMY

Reduced access to assets and services increases the chances of women not participating in the labour force.

UNSUSTAINABLE FUNDING

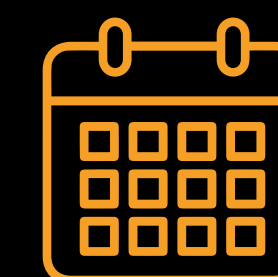
The changes in the priorities of international organisations and donors lead to a lower rate of funding continuity for successful projects.

LACK OF DATA

Policies tend to be devised and enforced without updated gender data, making it difficult to fully depict the situation on the ground.

AREAS OF ACTION

- **1. Labour infrastructure and services**
Fostering multi-stakeholder cooperation in order to increase women's access to labour infrastructure, assets and services for maintaining a work-life balance, as well as introducing the importance of the care economy in policymaking priorities.
- **2. Women in rural areas and in agriculture**
Creating a policy focus around the status of women in rural areas and in the agriculture sector, integrating them into the labour market and increasing their digital skills.
- **3. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)**
Pushing forward GRB in order to increase the sustainability of projects working towards women's economic empowerment.



NEXT STEPS

The Working Group will convene in autumn 2022 for its second meeting, at which it will develop concrete follow-up actions in the selected areas of work.

