

# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

*Bridging the rural gap through policy action*

## Who, What, Why?

Over 30 high-level personalities and experts participated in the **third meeting** of Friends of Europe's **Working Group on women's economic empowerment in the Western Balkans** in **Pristina, Kosovo\*** in **April 2023**. The Working Group set a special focus on **empowering women in rural areas and women employed in agriculture**.

Pristina  
April 2023

### 1. Increasing women's access to finance and legal aid

Incentives for female applicants in government and non-governmental grants and special subsidies for female entrepreneurs would enhance equal access to financial resources, and free legal aid would help them to better understand legal mechanisms and gain rights.

### 3. Promoting digitalisation through technology

Stronger internet coverage and higher digital literacy rates would assist more rural women, particularly in work-related programmes and social media for business promotion, to utilise available digital resources as a source of income.

### 4. Increasing networking opportunities

Cross-national networking would allow the identification of solutions for issues on the ground through the exchange of thoughts and experiences, which could take place via specific fora and mentorship programmes.

## AREAS OF ACTION

### 2. Strengthening women's ownership rights

Specific clauses in legal documents and compulsory registration of property under the names of both spouses would decrease the violation of women's ownership rights, especially in cases of divorce.

### 5. Involving men in the process

Working together with the men of the family could help overcome gender stereotypes and allow for a greater degree of women's economic emancipation in rural areas.

## NEXT STEPS

The Working Group will convene in autumn 2023 for its fourth and last meeting, at which it will develop concrete recommendations and follow-up actions around the theme of **gender-responsive budgeting**.

## MAIN CHALLENGES TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN

### Poor legal enforcement

Many laws and regulations are very progressive on paper but tend to be poorly implemented in practice, making rural women unaware of their rights and opportunities.

### Low access to finance and technical skills

Application processes for grants and subsidies tend to be complicated and technical, hindering rural women's access to finance and chances of participating in the labour force, thereby reinforcing their dependence on men.

### Low property ownership

A lack of information on property ownership rights, usually concerning land, means rural women are unable to receive loans and to become economically independent.

### Lack of data

The overall unavailability of aggregated data and gender-based indicators limits the understanding around the impact of local, national and international initiatives, and jeopardises the development of evidence-based policymaking.



WESTERN BALKAN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



CIVIL SOCIETY



ACADEMIA



PRIVATE COMPANIES, START-UPS AND ENTERPRISES

\* For the United Nations, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

