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WOMEN LEADING: ECONOMY, ALLIANCES & THE FUTURE OF INTEGRATION

Format: High-Level Regional Dialogue
Date and time: 04 – 05 May 2026
Venue: Hotel „Splendid“ Budva, Montenegro

AGENDA

DAY 1 – WOMEN LEADING EUROPE’S NEXT GROWTH CHAPTER

09-30 - 10:00 Arrival, Registration and Strategic Networking

10:00 - 10:30 Welcome notes

- **Maida Gorčević**, Minister of European Affairs, Podgorica
- **Ekaterina Paniklova**, UNDP Resident Representative, Podgorica
- **Liselotte Isaksson**, Deputy Head of Cooperation Section, Delegation of the EU, Podgorica

Conferencier: **Duška Pejović**, journalist and UNDP gender equality expert

10:30 - 11:30 Women leading next growth chapter

Objective: This opening session sets the political and strategic framework of the dialogue by asking who is accountable for ensuring that economic growth and reform processes in the Western Balkans include women as leaders and economic actors. Building on evidence comparing regional and EU gender gaps, the panel highlights the role of political leadership in advancing gender equality as a driver of inclusive growth, in line with the EU accession process, the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Maida Gorčević**, Minister of European Affairs, Podgorica
- **Ivana Živković**, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNDP Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, New York
- **Neva Grašič**, State Secretary for European Affairs, International Law and Protection of Interests and Economic Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ljubljana
- **Andreina Marsella**, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, Podgorica
- **Branimir Jukić**, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Podgorica
- **Nicole Ameline**, Lawyer and former Vice-Chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- **Carlien Scheele**, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality, Vilnius

- **Anna Collins Falk**, International Coordinator and Senior Advisor, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, Stockholm

Moderator: **Kaća Đuričković**, UNDP Team Leader, Gender Equality & Western Balkan Gender Equality Programme, Podgorica

11:30 - 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 - 13:00 Economy redefined - women, growth and competitiveness

Objective: Building on the political commitments highlighted earlier, this panel focuses on the economic dimension of women's leadership. It examines how women's participation in the labour market, entrepreneurship and leadership contributes to economic growth, competitiveness and innovation, and discusses policy reforms needed to unlock women's economic potential in the region.

- **Naida Nišić**, Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue, Podgorica
- **Valentina Radulović**, Director of the Science Technology Park, Podgorica
- **Adnan Efendić**, Professor of Economics, Sarajevo
- **Nikica Mojsoska-Blaževski**, Professor of Economics and CEO, Skopje
- **Aleksandra Kiković**, UNDP Team Leader, Inclusive and Green Growth, Podgorica
- **Danijela Gačević**, Head of the Programme Department, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo

Moderators: **Marija Blagojević**, UNDP Gender Equality Expert and **Ana Nives Radović**, Economist and FinTech Analyst

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch

14:30 - 15:30 How to redesign the system? Equality. Knowledge. Progress.

Objective: Following the economic discussion, this session looks at the institutional and policy systems that must support women's economic empowerment. The panel explores how education, human capacity development and innovation ecosystems and policies can be redesigned to create equal opportunities for women in merging economic sectors.

- **Fatmir Gjeka**, Minister of Human and Minority Rights, Podgorica
- **Orjana Osmani**, Deputy Minister of Education, Tirana
- **Agron Camaj**, Director, Human Resources Management Authority, Podgorica
- **Marina Nacka**, Professor in Agricultural Economics, Skopje
- **Gordana Danilović**, Gender Equality, Innovation and Science Advocate, Belgrade
- **Rozalija Karchicka-Vasilevska**, Programme Manager at the Regional School of Public Administration, Podgorica
- **Jesus Sanchez Mugica**, gender equality expert, Bilbao

Moderators: **Stevan Kandić** and **Marina Braletić**, UNDP's Gender Equality Trainers

15:30 - 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 - 17:00 Women's business - from margins to markets

Objective: This session brings the policy discussion to the level of real business experiences. Through case-based stories from women entrepreneurs and innovators, it highlights practical barriers and opportunities for scaling women-led businesses and improving access to finance, markets and innovation ecosystems.

- **Sanja Lukarevska**, Member of Parliament and Chair of Parliamentary Committee on Finance and Budget, Skopje
- **Sabi Osmani**, Executive Director of the Women's Economic Chamber, Tirana
- **Pavle Radovanović**, Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, Podgorica
- **Biljana Jorgić**, Economist and Business Leader, Sarajevo
- **Anđela Pejović**, Student and Gender Equality Advocate
- **Anja Orlandić**, UNDP Student Ambassador

Moderators: **Marko Savić**, researcher and UNDP gender equality expert and **Anđela Đokić**, business leader

17:00 Networking

19:00 - 20:00 Dinner

20:15 - 21:30 Theatre play

DAY 2 – ALLIANCES, NETWORKS & THE NEXT GENERATION

09:00 - 09:15 Reflection on Day 1

A brief reflection summarizing key insights and messages from Day 1 discussions.

Conferencier: **Duška Pejović**, journalist and UNDP gender equality expert

09:15 - 10:30 Architecture of (in)equality

Objective: This diagnostic session examines the institutional mechanisms responsible for gender equality across the Western Balkans. By assessing governance structures and accountability mechanisms, the panel identifies gaps between policy commitments and implementation and explores how institutions can better support gender equality reforms.

- **Jelenka Andrić**, Member of Parliament, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality, Podgorica
- **Denada Seferi**, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Tirana
- **Edi Gusia**, Head of the Agency for Gender Equality, Pristina
- **Milan Antonijević**, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Belgrade
- **Biljana Pejović**, Head of the Department for Gender Equality, Podgorica
- **Kika Babić Svetlin**, Senior Advisor in Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Sarajevo
- **Kadrije Mustafa**, Department of Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Social Policy, Youth and Demography, Skopje

Moderators: **Marija Blagojević**, UNDP gender equality expert and **Milica Nikolić**, Human Resources Management Authority

10:30 - 11:00 Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:00 Power in alliance - Why women's regional networks matter

Objective: This session explores how regional alliances and women's networks contribute to advancing gender equality and women's leadership across the Western Balkans. By bringing together political leaders, civil society actors and regional initiatives, the discussion will examine how cross-border cooperation strengthens advocacy, policy

dialogue and accountability for gender equality commitments. The session will highlight how women's networks and alliances can support regional reform processes linked to EU integration, the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and the Berlin Process.

- **Majda Adžović**, Minister of Public Works, Podgorica
- **Marko Vešligaj**, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Zagreb
- **Michele Ribotta**, UN Women Representative, Tirana
- **Vesna Pusić**, Women in Diplomacy advocate, Zagreb
- **Daša Šilović**, Global Gender Equality Advocate and Central and East-European Network Network, Zagreb
- **Bosiljka Vuković**, Women in Diplomacy Network, Podgorica
- **Sanja Damjanović**, Professor of Physics and Leader, Podgorica,

Moderators: **Kaća Đuričković**, UNDP Team Leader, Gender Equality & Western Balkan Gender Equality Programme, Podgorica and **Teuta Sahatqija**, Gender Equality Advocate and Women in Tech Network, Pristina

12:00 - 13:00 Intergenerational exchange passing the torch without losing the fire

Objective: This session focuses on sustaining progress through leadership continuity. By connecting experienced leaders with emerging voices, it explores how knowledge, experience and new perspectives can shape the future of women's leadership and gender equality in the region.

- **Siniša Bjeković**, Ombudsperson, Podgorica
- **Sonja Lokar**, Gender Expert and Former Head of EU Lobby for Gender Equality, Ljubljana
- **Olivera Komar**, Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, Podgorica
- **Lana Nikolić**, Podcast Founder, Illustrator and Human Rights Activist, Belgrade
- **Teodora Mileska**, Feminist Educator and Advocate, Stella Network, Skopje
- **Aida Koluder Agić**, Architect and Human Rights Activist
- **Snežana Savić**, Student and Gender Equality Advocate

Moderators: **Bojana Tomović**, UNDP gender equality expert and **Tea Dakić**, Psychiatrist and Human Rights Activist, Podgorica

13:00 - 13:15 Closing Reflections and Forward Signals

- **Bojan Vujović**, Director General of the Directorate for Coordination of EU Financial Assistance in the Ministry of European Affairs, Podgorica
- **Silke Hollander**, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Podgorica

13:15 - 15:00 Lunch and Departure