

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:

Areas for joint actions in the Western Balkans



#listentowomen
#WBWomenPower

- Bringing in reforms for long-term and systemic change
- Fostering regional cooperation and partnerships

Overall outcomes would lead to reducing gender gaps and development of the Western Balkans Six

- Increase in women's labour force participation and entrepreneurship → increase in Western Balkan GDP by up to 20%
- Women's leadership in politics and the economy → boost innovation and growth
- Higher women's representation → higher quality of governance
- Higher number of women in companies' top-management → sustained profitable growth

Key priorities

1. Accelerate women's entrepreneurship

Only **27.5%** of business owners are women mostly operating in smaller, non-capital-intensive and low-income sectors, lacking access to credit and networking opportunities

- #### ACTIONS
- Increase women's access to finance, especially in rural areas, through grant schemes and training programmes
 - Create gender-sensitive business training and entrepreneurship upskilling programmes
 - Boost networking opportunities for businesswomen across the Western Balkans and with the European Union
 - Encourage innovation investments and support women-owned businesses

2. Reduce gender gaps in digitalisation and STEM

The share of women in STEM occupations is **14%** due to gender stereotypes, pay gaps and gender bias that prevent many girls in the region from choosing education in STEM fields

- #### ACTIONS
- Promote formal and non-formal STEM-related education among girls and women
 - Support women's employment in STEM fields by reducing gender discrimination in recruitment, promotions and gender pay
 - Encourage employers and policymakers to adopt an ecosystem approach to assess how women are progressing along the digital inclusion continuum
 - Develop a sub-regional online advocacy platform to promote gender equality in STEM fields

3. Recognise and redistribute unpaid work and invest in the care economy

Western Balkan women perform on average **3 times more** unpaid work than men and spend about half as much time in paid work where they account for almost **80%** of workers in low-paid care sectors

- #### ACTIONS
- Promote recognition of unpaid care work volume
 - Support public investment in care sectors and ensure decent work and social protection for paid care workers, including migrant workers
 - Promote employer- or state-funded provision of childcare or tax policies that encourage both spouses to work
 - Encourage the adoption of flexible work arrangements
 - Support businesses investing in childcare plans with subsidies and grants

4. Promote women's leadership and access to decent work

40% of the total employed in the Western Balkans are women and more than **23%** of them hold insecure jobs

- #### ACTIONS
- Assess policies and advocate for decent work
 - Ensure equal opportunities and treatment in employment
 - Ensure flexible work arrangements and a safe working environment
 - Establish a gender monitor to measure progress made
 - Establish a leadership academy to ensure gender equality in economy, digital transformation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

5. Transform the public and private sectors to deliver gender equality

Only **14.2%** of companies' top managers are female and even though nearly half of all public administration employees are women, they are mostly concentrated in lower paid branches

- #### ACTIONS
- Develop accountability frameworks in public institutions and the private sector
 - Make gender-responsive budgeting mandatory gender standards
 - Step up women's participation in the boards of financial and governing institutions and companies
 - Facilitate mentorship programmes to advance women in leadership positions
 - Introduce a certification for gender equality in the public and private sectors
 - Promote gender parity in leadership and flexible work arrangements