



Newsletter  
**“Progressive Men and Women on the Move for  
Gender Equality”**

**2st Quarter 2017**



## Editorial

We hope you are enjoying the summer months, although most of our activities are still going on! Preparations for our 2017 Think Tank Korčula School on the topic “**Transforming Politics – Inter-generational dialogue on gender equality and solidarity**” will take place in *Cavtat (Croatia) on Saturday, 26 and Sunday, 27 August 2017*. This is our sixth annual Korčula School.

The Think Tank gathers women and men - progressive, socialist and social democratic leaders from South Eastern Europe and their counterparts from other European progressive parties and institutions.

The Korčula School is organised by the Central and Eastern Network for Gender Issues (CEE Network) in collaboration with the Center for New Initiatives (Zagreb) and under the financial sponsorship of the Olof Palme International Center, the Party of European Socialist Women (PESW) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES).

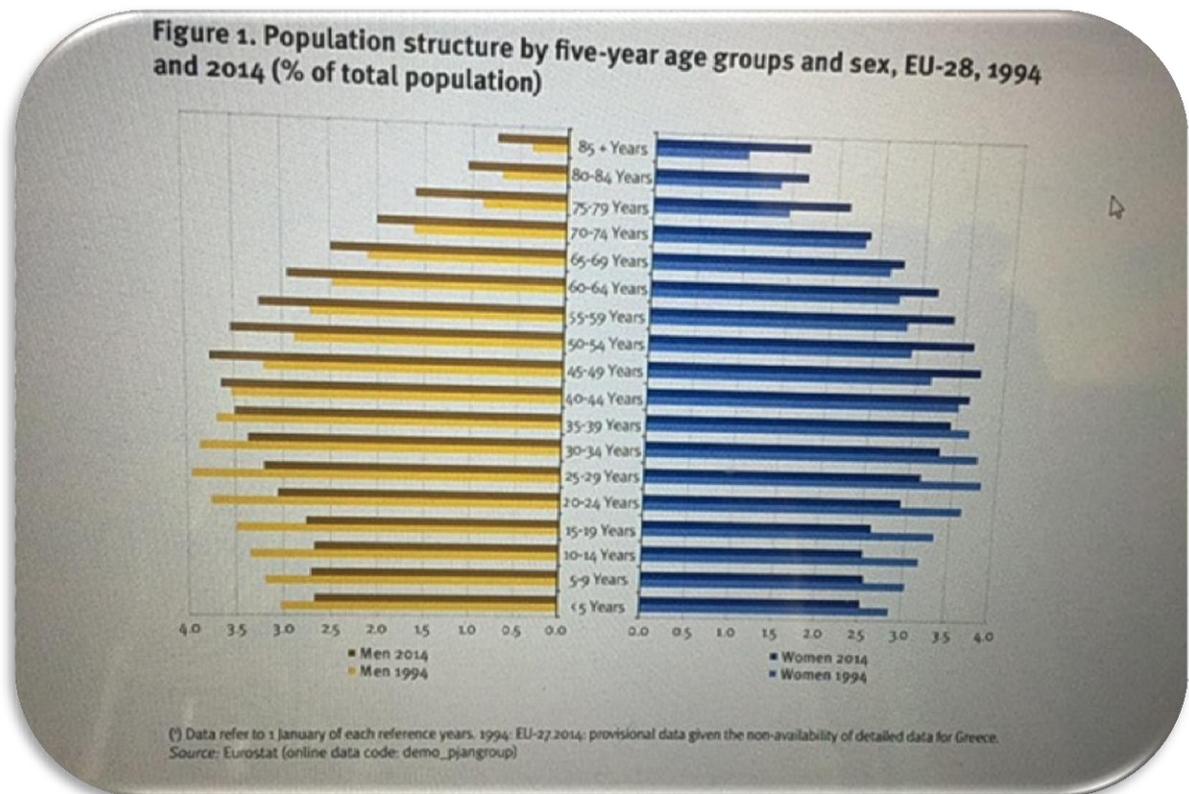
The Korčula School has a think tank format and applies Chatham House rules to foster a free, open and substantive debate among participants.

## Conceptual Framework and Objectives

1. Participants engage in an open, progressive and substantive political discussion on current political challenges for their progressive parties and countries seeking to inform and influence political discourse from a gender differentiated perspective, as a key precondition for democracy, social justice and respect for the human rights of all citizens.
2. The ultimate objective of the “Korčula School” is to strengthen democracy in the countries of the region through equal participation of women in socialist, progressive and left oriented parties and the mainstreaming of gender equality in the country policies and legal provisions. This is a tall task in view of the right wing and conservative trends in the region.
3. Gender equality is the basis of our societies in terms of democracy, human rights but also in terms of power sharing, social justice and societal wellbeing. Without it there cannot be progress, economic growth and prosperity. The gender concept goes beyond women, but rather it is a vital dynamic in any society. The constantly evolving relationship between women and men and between younger and older generations are at the crux of social development and the political dialogue. It is therefore crucial to engage in a dialogue and understanding of these relationships, power balances and the changing social and political contexts.
4. While Europe and the region are facing multiple political and development challenges (political, economic, social and demographic) it is important to maintain the gender equality agenda as a priority with a view that development hinges on the differentiated roles, interests and priorities and needs of women and men in societies, as well as those of the millennials and the older generation. Solidarity among generations and an integrated approach to the fulfilment of heterogeneous generational interests and needs should be a political priority for progressive parties in the shaping of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
5. Today there are around 700 million persons aged 60 years and over in the world. It is estimated that this figure will double by 2025 and that by 2050, older persons will constitute 20 per cent of the global population. A demographic revolution is underway whereby age and gender matter

especially in terms of ensuring that the positive, democracy and human rights based political options that would ensure social inclusion, justice and solidarity prevail.

6. Most EU member states, as well as those in the process of accession, are faced with a demographic decline, basically low birth rates and parallel to that an increase in life expectancy which is different for women who live longer than men on average. This situation is already impacting the country ability for social and labour reproduction with a strong impact on conventional relationships between (and among) the generations.



7. To address these issues relating to the inter-section between gender and generational developments in our societies, the 2017 Think Tank session will focus on the importance of inter-generational dialogue in Europe, and the region, to foster *transformative politics*, gender equality and inter-generational solidarity and assist political parties on the centre left in their political positioning. Basically, this means looking at ways and measures to meet the needs of today's generations without damaging the chances of future generations, i.e. a better future for all without jeopardizing the present.
8. The political debate has either focused on the views and patterns of millennials in politics and elections and youth unemployment, or on demographic concerns and issues related to the maintenance of social systems and expenditures in a neo-liberal economic policy environment.



However, it is more and more evident that our countries and systems are dependent on the concept of (intergenerational and gender) solidarity, an integral part of the European economic and social system, and – therefore – a crucial factor in this debate. According to the European Commission, solidarity and the creation of links between younger and older generations should not be seen in strict financial terms. The Commission recommends placing equal importance on the promotion of mutual cooperation and interchanges between and among the generations, as well as better understanding of the gender differentiated impact and new forms of solidarity.

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*Wana Sari Sibnic*



Chair, International Board, CEE Network for Gender Issues

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

### **1. International conference: Women's rights against far right**

The Conference was jointly organized by the CEE Network for Gender Issues Ljubljana Office and PES Women under the title: “Women's rights against the far right” in Ljubljana in June 2017. The objective of the conference was to engage in a serious debate among women and minority rights activists working in the EU and in the SEE region and empower them to challenge the growing extreme right which is leading a crusade against the very concept of gender equality as defined in Beijing in 1995 (see the interview conducted by the CEE Network with Milan Kučan, former president of the Republic of Slovenia at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nW4tCI4Xo5Q>).

The conference started with a night owl session on Friday where a prominent woman politician from the SDSM of Macedonia, President of the EU integration Council of the party, Lidija Dimova presented how massive activities of the SDUM WF helped the party to form a broader progressive coalition which has finally succeeded to win the general elections in Macedonia.

While Finnish ambassador at large, Pekka Metso presented his experience of working with minority groups in Finland and religious leaders in order to diminish violent radicalisation of the marginalised minority youth.



The second day of the conference was an opportunity to exchange the experience of the representatives of the prominent NGOs working with refugees in the Balkans, as well as with Solidar, scholars and SD women politicians from Sweden, Finland, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, B&H, Macedonia and Montenegro on how to successfully deal with populist and gender equality hostile far right.

There were several examples that SD need to defend whatever has been already achieved in the field of women and minority rights using broader, crosscutting issue coalitions.

It has been concluded that the situation in the region is getting worse and it would be good to start a new women's peace initiative in order to confront growing nationalism and militarisation



of the region. Instead of more money for defence within the NATO we need better minimal wages, more quality jobs for youth, and better protection of economic and social rights, especially of the precarious workers.

The main conclusion of the conference was that giving in to the far right populists is the worst possible reaction. Instead progressive and social democratic parties need to bravely enter in open public debate about all difficult questions that the far right is answering with simplistic populist solutions, with clear-cut, well-funded arguments openly confronting far right values and visions.



**Sonja Lokar**

CEE Network for Gender Issues Executive Director and President of the Women's Lobby of Slovenia

## 2. Prva premijerka Srbije

U Srbiji je posle gotovo tri decenije od uvođenja višestranačja za Predsednicu Vlade je izabrana žena, Ana Brnabić. Poslednji put zemlju u kojoj sam živeo vodila je žena, Milka Planinc, od 1982 do 1986. godine kao Predsednica Saveznog izvršnog veća SFRJ. Ona je u istoriji ostala zabeležena kao jedina premijerka jedne socijalističke države.

Uvek sam se pitao zašto u periodima kada neku zemlju vodi desnica, žene mogu da dođu na istaknute funkcije, a kada je vodi levica to ispada nemoguće? Zašto se levičarske stranke koje su uvek svetu donosile progres i promene, naročito u oblastima ljudskih prava, solidarnosti i ravnopravnosti, teško odlučuju da povere odgovorne funkcije ženama? Nama levičarima to ostaje kao važna bitka koju moramo da dobijemo da bismo istinski ravnopravno otvorili politički prostor svima.

Verujem da su kvote važne i da je tih minimalnih 30% neophodno za promenu. Na žalost ovoga puta smo dobili predsednicu Vlade ali smo izgubili jednu ministarku i broj žena u Vladi, je sa 25 odsto pao na 22 odsto. Bez obzira na sve to izbor Ane Brnabić predstavlja korak napred i veliko ohrabrenje za sve nas koji očekujemo da će žena na ovako važnoj funkciji biti senzibilisanija za pitanja rodne ravnopravnosti, ljudskih i manjinskih prava, politika jednakih mogućnosti i borbu protiv nasilja. Ovo je velika prilika da Vlada konačno predloži novi Zakon o rodnoj ravnopravnosti, koji već godinama čekamo i bez koga je napredak u ovoj oblasti nemoguć.

Međutim, ekspozice nove Predsednice nije bio rodno senzitivan. Rodna ravnopravnost je pomenuta samo jednom i to kod pohvale da je Srbija uvela "Indeks rodne ravnopravnosti" po ugledu na članice EU. U samom ekspozeu je bilo mnogo prilika da se istakne podrška ženama u mnogim sektorima i oblastima koje je navela. Njena najava "kao Predsednica Vlade ohrabrivaću dijalog", verujem će unaprediti mere koje su ekspozeu navedene. Ukoliko zaista bude otvorena za dijalog sa civilnim društvom i otvorena za njegove predloge, to će već biti dovoljno makar za minimalne pomake napred.

Da situacija u Srbiji u ovoj oblasti nije sjajna pokazala je i javna debata "Vojvodina liderka rodne ravnopravnosti?" koja je održana u Novom Sadu. Podsetiću da je Skupština Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine bila prva institucija koja je nakon promena 2000. - te uvela tela i donela odluke u vezi sa rodnom ravnopravnošću i uvek je gledana kao liderka u ovoj oblasti sa mnogobrojnim programima i otvorenim dijalogom. Na tom skupu su ekspertkinje analizirale prvih godinu dana rada nove Vlade Vojvodine. Podaci do kojih su došle pokazuju da je приметно smanjenje aktivnosti, diskontinuitet u radu pokrajinskih mehanizama za rodnu ravnopravnost i da je saradnja sa ženskim organizacijama slabija nego ikad. Ovi izneseni podaci su važni jer govore o tome da Ana Brnabić nasleđuje sistem za unapređenje rodne ravnopravnosti koji značajno manje funkcionalan nego što je to nekada bio. Samim tim, njen posao u ovoj oblasti će biti težji.



Predsednica Vlade je jednom prilikom izjavila "Ustav nas obavezuje da štitimo prava svih naših građana i da se ta zaštita mora videti u svemu što radimo i govorimo." Ova izjava i njeno lično životno iskustvo, koje je sigurno u velikoj meri bilo obeleženo njenim ličnim svojstvima, može biti taj prvi impuls za početak građenja politika ravnopravnosti. Zato verujemo da će, što se tiče rodne ravnopravnosti, dijalog sa Predsednicom Vlade biti otvoren i da ćemo uskoro moći da kažemo da Vlada Srbije menja svest i uvodi neophodne promene koje će doprineti da rodna ravnopravnost postane važno razvojno pitanje.

### **English (informal) translation**

Almost three decades after the introduction of the multi-party system in Serbia, a woman, Ana Brnabić, was elected Prime Minister. Milka Planinc who was President of the Federal Executive Council of the SFRY (1982-1986) was the last time a woman was elected to this position in the country in which lived. Planinc has remained in history as the only prime minister of a socialist state.

I have always wondered why is it that in periods when a country is led by the right, women can come to prominent functions, but when the left is in power it turns out to be impossible?! Why do left-wing parties that have always brought about progress and change, especially in the areas of human rights, solidarity and equality, have difficulty in delegating responsible functions to women? We on the left have to wage and win this important battle in order to truly and equally open the political space for everyone.

I believe that the quotas are important and that a minimum of 30% quota for women is necessary for the change. Unfortunately, this time we did get a Prime Minister woman, but we lost one woman minister and the number of women in the government fell from 25% to 22%. Regardless of this, Ana Brnabić represents a step forward and a great encouragement for all of us who expect that the woman in such an important function will be partial to issues of gender equality, human and minority rights, equal opportunity policies and the fight against violence. This is a great opportunity for the Government to finally submit a new Law on Gender Equality, which we have been waiting for years and without which progress in this area is impossible.

However, the speeches of the new Prime Minister were not gender sensitive. Gender equality is mentioned only once praising Serbia for introducing the "Gender Equality Index" based on action taken by EU members. In this speech, however, there were many opportunities to highlight the support and participation of women in many sectors and areas it cited. Her statement that "as Prime Minister I shall encourage dialogue", I believe will improve the measures outlined above. If her cabinet will be really open to dialogue with civil society and open to its proposals, it will already be enough at least for the minimum step forward.

That the situation in Serbia in this area is not great was also shown by the public debate "Vojvodina leader of gender equality?" which was held in Novi Sad. I would like to remind that the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was the first institution that, after the change in 2000, introduced the relevant assembly bodies and made decisions regarding gender

equality and was always seen as a leader in this area with numerous programmes and open dialogue. Experts analysed the first year of work of the new Government of Vojvodina at that meeting. The data they have come to indicate that there is a noticeable decrease in activity, a discontinuity in the work of provincial gender equality mechanisms, and that cooperation with women's organisations is weaker than ever. This data are important because they indicate that Ana Brnabić inherits a system for the promotion of gender equality that is significantly less functional than it used to be. Therefore, her job in this area will be tougher.

The Prime Minister once stated: "The Constitution obliges us to protect the rights of all our citizens and that this protection must be seen in everything we do and speak." This statement and her personal life experience, which has certainly been largely marked by her personal qualities, can be the first impulse to start building equality policies. Therefore, we believe that with regard to gender equality, the dialogue with the President of the Government (Prime Minister) will be opened and that we will soon be able to say that the Government of Serbia changes its mind and introduces the necessary changes that will contribute to gender equality becoming an important development issue



**Miloš Đajić, Centar modernih veština and Demokratska stranka member**



### 3. 20 years of the WF of SDP B&H

On July 1, in Tuzla, Karolina Leaković, in her capacity of the PES W Vice president, and Sonja Lokar, CEE Network Board member took active part in the regular evaluation conference of the WF of the SDP BiH. There were 96 delegates out of 113 invited present at this conference.

This year, the Forum is celebrating its 20th birthday, and has a remarkable record of advocating for women's human rights within its own party and in B&H society. It has great cooperation with several SD international foundations, it developed a school for women SD politicians, a toolkit on gender equality to help male party leaders to better understand gender equality issues. Regardless of their tireless work the report of the WF SDP B&H openly states that the party is still not really gender equality sensitive and does not fulfil its own decisions regarding special measures needed for leveling the ground and sharing the power between men and women within the party.

Karolina Leaković and Sonja Lokar also presented their views on the issue on how SD women can become real political leaders. The main point of both of them was that the only leadership that counts is the one which leads to the transformative politics.



**Sonja Lokar**

**CEE Network for Gender Issues Executive Director and  
President of the Women's Lobby of Slovenia**

#### 4. Open letter to Minister Katić

„U BIH imamo jednu od najsravnijih praksi segregacije djece kao rezultat nacionalnih stranaka tzv »dvije škole pod jednim krovom«.U jednu idu hrvatska,a u drugu bošnjačka djeca. Danas je takvih 54 škole, osnovne i srednje.Takve škole egzistiraju u nekoliko kantona u kojima je izrazita vlast HDZ BIH I SDA.

Prošle godine je ministrica obrazovanja Katica Čerkez i Vlada Srednjobosanskog kantona(SBK) donijela odluku da se u Jajcu Srednja strukovna škola podijelila na dvije, hrvatsku i bošnjačku.Tad se dogodila nevjerovatna stvar, po prvi put u BIH , da su se pobunili učenici svih nacionalnosti i rekli da ne žele podjele! Naišli su na oduševljenje jednog dijela javnosti i ćutanje drugog. Bili su uporni, podržali su ih i predstavnici međunarodne zajednice, OSCE, Američka ambasada i drugi. Nedavno su organizirali proteste pred Vladom SBK u Travniku. Primila ih je i ministrica Katica Čerkez i razgovarala sa njima. Rekla im je da je bolje da idu u disko nego da se bore sa vjetrenjačama, da su mehanizam u rukama međunarodne zajednice i da iza toga stoji opozicija, lijeve snage itd. Ovaj sramotni istup ministrice Čerkez me ponukao da napišem ovaj tekst.“

#### English (informal) translation

"In Bosnia and Herzegovina we have one of the most shameful practices of segregation of children as a result of the national parties of the so-called" two schools under one roof." The Croat children go to one part of the school and Bosniak children to the other. Today there are 54 primary and secondary schools of this kind. These schools exist in several cantons where HDZ BIH and SDA rule with strong authority.

Last year, the Minister of Education Katica Čerkez and the Government of the Central Bosnia Canton (SBK) made the decision to divide the Jajce Secondary Vocational School into two, Croatian and Bosniak. Then for the first time an incredible thing happened in BiH – students of all nationalities rebelled. They said that they do not want to be separated! They met with enthusiasm of one part of the public and the silence of the other. They were persistent, supported by representatives of the international community, the OSCE, the US Embassy and others. Lastly, they organised protests in front of the SBK Government in Travnik. They also met with Minister Katica Čerkez who spoke to them. She suggested to them that it is better to go to disco clubs than to fight windmills, that they are instruments in the hands of the international community and that opposition, the left force are behind all this, etc. This shameful statement of Minister Čerkez encouraged me to write this text. "



**Besima Borić, SDP BIH**



## 5. Things got serious

Things got serious. Very serious.

Half a year ago, a long-awaited Constitutional court decision on abortion rights in Croatia was announced. After more than twenty years it was finally clear that abortion in Croatia is legal and can't be banned, while in next couple of years legislation needs to be improved.

This important decision marked a new chapter in pro-choice movement and among feminist activists all around Croatia that soon gathered on the Reproductive Rights Platform, a non-formal activist and awareness-raising format.

While anti-choice activists occupy a significant part of public space, framing their anti-choice narrative as "culture of life", strategies of pro-choice actors still need to become more coherent and focused. More strategic approach is needed, and many more human rights, feminist and secular activists need to be involved in this decisive political process for women's rights in Croatia.

One of the best guides (so far), and a great source of relevant information on similar debates and feminist struggles in other parts of Europe and around the world has been a recent publication titled "Things got serious", published by Zagreb-based NGO CESI - Center for Education, Counseling and Research.

A relatively short, but rather informative and useful brochure, it is designed for pro-choice activists that will, sooner or later, participate in various public debates on regulating sexual and reproductive rights of women in Croatia.

While Catholic church and its affiliated anti-choice organizations in Croatia as well in Central European countries, invest funds in fighting fundamental women's sexual and reproductive rights, all we feminists and progressives can do is disseminate information, network and learn from each others experiences. This brochure thus brings case-studies from other countries, insists on building international coalition, even with organizations such as Catholics pro-choice.

With arguments based on medical, legal and sociological research, our fight for women's rights is based on solid, scientific arguments. While the Constitutional Court ruled that new legislation of abortion rights needs to be approved in Croatian parliament by March 2019, political debate on this matter has not really started.

Quite aggressive, well-organized and well-funded anti-choice organizations are very much into the topic, while progressive actors on the other side still are not that visible or influential, at least in political sphere.

It is clear that women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is not and can't be the issue of feminist non-governmental organizations only: it is primarily a political question and all progressive political forces have to be involved and thus held responsible for improving status of women in Croatia.



A broad progressive coalition has to be created, with as many actors and advocates as possible. Our platform should seek for legislation that goes far beyond what women in Croatia are entitled to now (and that legislation dates back to 1978!). Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, is definitely a feminist question of a generation. This opportunity is not to be missed!



***Karolina Leaković, SDP Croatia Women's Forum and PES Women Vice-President***

## **REPORTS**

### **1. Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls, UN E/CN.6/2017/16**

On 16 and 17 March 2017, in a series of interactive dialogues, the Commission on the Status of Women evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the priority theme of its fifty-eighth session, namely, the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls (see E/CN.6/2014/3). One of the CSW Vice-Chairs is Sejla Durbuzovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina). Only two UN member states from the region, namely Bulgaria and Slovakia, on a voluntary basis presented information on the status of women in their countries. It was acknowledged the significant influence of the UN agreed conclusions on the global gender equality normative framework, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They highlighted the opportunity to build on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goal process for the accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls.

Many noted that, in addition to having constitutional prohibitions against gender discrimination, legal reforms continued to be implemented to address ongoing discrimination, in particular with respect to violence against women, access to justice and women's labour and economic rights. Countries reported on the strengthening of existing legislation and the introduction of new gender equality legislation and improvements made to enforcement in line with international commitments.

Countries noted that creating an enabling environment through gender sensitive approaches to policies and programmes was crucial to advancing gender equality. Many had implemented gender mainstreaming as a key strategy across a broad range of policy areas.

Presenting countries discussed measures to achieve work-life balance. Maternity leave policies, care services and flexible work arrangements had enabled women to continue employment throughout motherhood.

Looking forward to 2030, it was widely agreed that collaborative approaches would be most effective in making progress in securing women's social protection and their labour and economic rights and in making measurable progress with respect to their participation in politics and decision-making.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017/official-documents>

### **2. 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work'**



The priority theme of UN 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61, March 2017) was in itself a pioneering one – ‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’. Whilst women’s economic empowerment has previously been considered in various fora including the CSW, this focus on the connection between women’s economic empowerment and the changing world of work encompassing women’s right to work and rights at work, as well as the commitment to decent work and full and productive employment, is both new and constitutes a vital area of intergovernmental norm and standard setting. Coming after CSW60 Agreed Conclusions’ reconfirmation that women’s economic empowerment is essential for both the full, effective and accelerated implementation of Beijing Platform for Action and for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the stakes were very high. Another context was that, beyond closing persistent gender gaps for women and improving their terms of engagement in the traditional world and sectors of work, the world of work is changing rapidly at a pace not seen before, spurred by innovation and technology, globalization, and increasing human mobility and informality of work. This changing world of work is at the same time adversely impacted by an unprecedented jobs crisis, persistent and widespread poverty, climate change, conflicts, humanitarian, migration and refugee crises, financial and economic challenges, economic slowdown and persistent and growing inequality between and within countries. These forces continuously shape the dynamics of the world of work, deepen extant challenges as well as present new and emerging opportunities for women’s economic empowerment through their leapfrogging into the new and green economy, ‘New Collar’ jobs and new entrepreneurship opportunities in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

The Agreed Conclusions provided a diagnosis of the existing and growing gender gaps and disparities in key areas of the world of work as well as their root causes. The major gender gaps identified included those relating to wages, income, pension, social security, work force participation, recruitment, retention, promotion, re-entry, leadership, occupational segregation, burden of unpaid care work, and access to economic and productive resources, all of which were comprehensively outlined. Also, it was recognized that progress has been insufficient and that this was impeding the realization of women’s full potential and the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Multiple and persisting structural barriers which contribute to these gender gaps and disparities in the world of work were identified throughout, along with ways to overcome them.

The essentiality of women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work was deemed variously vital, critical, mutually reinforcing and important to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identified as both a means and an end. The juxtaposition of the conceptual trinity of women’s economic rights, women’s economic empowerment and economic independence with women’s access to decent work and full and productive employment marks a major leap. The importance of the lifecycle approach was emphasized, including regarding the enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls including women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work; in the context of poverty eradication and ensuring an adequate standard of living and social protection; about the right to education and skills development; and to decent work in new and emerging fields. All this while making clear that child labour for girls is prohibited.



Both the NGO consultations and the CSW61 Youth Forum provided valuable inputs and dynamism to the CSW61 deliberations and outcomes. The key messages from the NGO-CSW61 consultation just prior to the opening of the session stressed the need to reimagine the flawed economic model that was perpetuating gender inequality and repurposing it for gender equality and social justice. They insisted on the role and responsibility of the State - through macroeconomic, fiscal, social and development policies to actively create the enabling environment that serves first and foremost social justice and gender equality. The international enabling environment - aid, trade, foreign direct investment, technology policies, were also identified as critical. The role of women's organizations at all levels including grass roots and their activism on the theme was essential. They wanted the private sector to be held to account.

<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/csw61-analysis.pdf?vs=2155>

### **3. CALL TO EUROPE VII: DEMOCRACY FIRST!**

For the 7th time FEPS team had the pleasure to host its annual flagship conference Call to Europe with the support of the member foundations: Fabian Society, Fondation Jean Jaurès, Foundation Max van der Stoelin, Das Progressive Zentrum, Kalevi Sorsa and Tancsics Mihaly Alapitvany, and in partnership with the S&D Group in the European Parliament and Europe Together in Brussels (28-29 June 2017). During two days of intense debate and discussions our experts had two mutually convergent objectives at heart: strengthening European Democracy and making the European Economic Governance more democratic.

European democracy is permanently challenged.

Nowadays, citizens feel there is not enough space to interact with European politics and express their opinions. European Democracy is at the core of what Call to Europe Conference aims to debate and address. The year 2017 marks the 7th iteration of FEPS annual conference under the title - “Democracy First!” – a unique platform that aims to bridge the gap and bring citizens closer to Europe by serving as a progressive hub where everyone can have their voices heard. These two dimensions (strengthening democracy in the EU and the Member states and Re-writing the rules of the European economy) were analysed, debated and discussed in order to bring back the optimism and trust in Europe, its institutions and in progressives as the catalysts of change for a better, stronger and social Europe.

- Watch S&D Vice President Maria João Rodrigues in her first address as FEPS President [here!](#)
- Check what Gianni Pitella, President of the S&D Group in the European Parliament [had to say](#) about the role of Progressives in Strengthening EU Democracy!
- Curious about the intervention of Sergei Stanishev, President of the Party of European Socialists? Do not worry if you missed this opportunity! You can see it [here](#).
- Watch also [the closing speech of Zita Gurmai](#), President of PES women.



<http://www.calltoeurope.eu/en/>

#### **4. Political gender parity is not possible without structural reform**

The electoral system used in the United States has led us into an era of fierce partisan division and limited voter power. The problem goes beyond gerrymandering, redistricting, and money. The zero-sum, winner-take-all system in which only one person is elected to represent each district no longer works in this era of hardened partisanship - and it has never worked for women.

The Fair Representation Act (HR 3057) gives voters of all backgrounds and all political stripes the power to elect House Members who reflect their views and will work constructively with others in Congress. Under the Fair Representation Act, there will be more choices and several winners elected in each district. Congress will remain the same size, but districts will be larger, each electing 3, 4, or 5 winners. Voters will be free to rank their choices without fear of "spoilers." No district will be "red" or "blue." Every district will fairly reflect the spectrum of voters.

Voters are clamoring for change. The Fair Representation Act is effective, constitutional, and grounded in American traditions. It will ensure that every vote counts, all voices are heard, and everyone has an equal opportunity to serve in elected office.

[http://www.representation2020.com/fair\\_rep\\_act#why\\_we\\_need\\_the\\_fair\\_representation\\_act](http://www.representation2020.com/fair_rep_act#why_we_need_the_fair_representation_act)

#### **5. "Movement Sparks"**

The State of Our Feminist Movements animation is the first of "Movement Sparks", a series of animations exploring key topics facing our movements for justice and liberation today; and the need for integrated and coherent approaches that cut across diverse locations, agendas, and strategies.

This animation series has been designed to spark continuing engagement and discussions on crucial issues highlighted at the 2016 AWID Forum and inspire engagement of AWID members and allies who we hope will take the dialogue further into their communities. Part 2 of the series will be released shortly and will focus on Climate & Environmental Justice.

"It is not only that time has changed us, but also that we have changed the times."  
-Bella Abzug

In recent years, we have seen tremendous waves of feminist responses and actions around the world to increasing oppressions, which have sparked the imagination and fire of seasoned and newer activists. Feminists around the world are asking, "Where does this moment lead to? What is the feminist agenda that movements are pushing for?" Feminist movements have been organizing and building power for decades and this is the moment to build on that power, assess past strategies and tactics, and renew and reimagine our collective work forward.



### Building on past efforts

The UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (the Beijing Conference) in 1995 was a rallying point for women's rights activists to reflect, envision and sharpen political agendas. The powerful articulation of "women's rights are human rights" helped the world to come alive to visions of a just society free from gender oppression and ways to realise this.

The feminist political subject that emerged through this process was not a victim of violence or subjugation alone, but a person with political, social and cultural agency and rights, capable of articulating their own visions of a just society, and joining with others to achieve this in reality. Through this process, also emerged a clear articulation and understanding of the structural causes of gender-based violence and discrimination. This became a premise for organizing within feminist movements locally and globally.

Since then, feminist movements have continued to address multiple dimensions of our experience:

- from violence; access to education and health care; sexual and reproductive health and justice; ownership or control over productive resources and income;
- to the depleting natural resource base and its impact on survival and livelihoods;
- and oppression on the basis of race, ethnicity, caste, gender identity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and ability.

Feminist movements have not only offered resistance, critique and analysis, but have also proposed, created and built intentional feminist realities.

These realities offer a much needed counterbalance to powerfully disrupt the oppressive structures, systems and ideologies that currently structure much of our world.

At the same time, past efforts of feminist movements merit a reflection on who has been driving the conversations, dominating the spaces and setting the agendas. The face and discourse of the feminist movements globally is shifting from northern dominated narratives and perspectives to more globally diverse, and nuanced in local contexts, agendas and processes.

Organizing is also becoming more and more interconnected across struggles and agendas.

Powerful feminist organizing today

Here are just a few examples of transformative work movements are doing in creating feminist realities:

- Regional networks as well as many others have developed authentic and holistic protection mechanisms, deeply embedding sustainability, self and collective care within our ways of working, institutions and personal lives.
- Movements across the world are working towards just transitions from capitalism and patriarchy as well as building towards fossil free futures. Indigenous feminists continue to play essential, unique roles in defending their land and natural resources. They put their traditional knowledge and experience to use in addressing climate change within their local communities.
- Kurdish women have put into practice a philosophy of self defence and social revolution, establishing women's guerilla groups, cooperatives, councils and other bodies across Kurdistan and further. They challenge the nation state and embrace direct action and autonomy, while rejecting patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and racism.
- Solidarity economies (including the cooperative economy and gift economy) provide a framework grounded in mutual aid, cooperation, sustainability, well-being and



democracy and have been put into practice in various locations in the form of among others cooperatives or associations.

- The principle and practice of food sovereignty, first introduced by La Via Campesina and advocated by food movements across the world, holds that all peoples have the right to healthy and culturally appropriate food which is produced in ecologically sustainable ways. Furthermore, all peoples have the right to choose their own food and agricultural systems.
- Movements in the global digital communities working towards the realization of a feminist internet. Young feminist led organizations such as HOLA! Africa whose organizing affords women in all their diversity the virtual space to express their lived realities, build community, embrace new technologies and dismantle patriarchy by elevating alternative narratives.
- Black feminist groups across Brazil, such as Geledés – Black Women’s Institute, are breaking with traditional forms of political participation and designing new strategies to guide Brazilian society away from patriarchal fundamentalism. Through their organisations, they are building a feminist future in line with concept of ‘Living Well’, reflecting the utopia of a full life, with dignity, justice and pleasure.

Despite these concrete and powerful achievements, a variety of factors have curtailed the collective power of our feminist movements in the last two decades.

Now, more than ever before, there is a need to engage in wide and deep reflection on the State of Our Feminist Movements, to refresh our assumptions and actions based on the political realities of today.

<https://www.awid.org/resources/state-our-feminist-movements>  
<https://youtu.be/9kOUMB0t4Kc>

## **6. Guide to Reporting Civic Space: Media Toolkit**

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people, everywhere in the world, have the right to speak out, to organise, and to take action. These rights – the freedoms of association, assembly and expression - give us the freedom to form and join groups, peacefully protest, and advocate for the things we want – and to counter the things we don’t. These freedoms are called ‘civic space’ and are an essential part of a vibrant democracy; where debate and discussion thrive, and where people are able to contribute to important decisions that affect them.

Across the world there is a growing trend of countries restricting citizens’ freedoms or making the work of civil society groups more difficult and dangerous, for example increased surveillance on ordinary citizens, activists and civil society organisations and targeted attacks and arrests. Furthermore, civil society activists, journalists and human rights defenders face escalating intimidation, harassment and reprisals, including imprisonment, for undertaking the work that



fighters for and protects human rights for us all. This toolkit was produced to be a useful, informative tool for connecting journalists and media with the challenges and opportunities currently happening in civil society. Most importantly, it provides story ideas, angles, and prompts designed to help media and journalists cover these issues better.

The toolkit comprises:

Section 1: provides information about the toolkit and introductory background on civic space.

Section 2: outlines key concepts for reporting civic space, including what makes a story newsworthy, and gender balanced reporting.

Section 3: unpacks the three fundamental freedoms associated with civic space, and offers stories ideas. For each of these freedoms you will find.

- Summary: short outline each freedom and the main issues faced around the world.
- Perspectives: ideas for angles and perspectives for different audiences.
- Humanise the story: suggestions of how to give a local or personal slant to stories, ensure diverse voices are heard.
- Dig deeper: ideas for more in-depth analysis and investigation.
- Information resources: background documents, potential sources.
- Fact boxes, case studies, and media tips from editors and journalists

The toolkit also includes a printable calendar of key dates for media, as well as a free to use infographic.

Media is critical for civics space, to hold governments to account, shine a spotlight on violations, and be a platform for the most marginalised voices to be heard. More than ever before, media and journalists have a vital role to fulfil. The rights to speak out, organise, and take action affect everyone, everywhere. By connecting civil society and journalists, media can provide new and unique stories to readers, viewers, and listening audiences.

<http://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-center/toolkits/2746-guide-to-reporting-civic-space>



## IMPRESSUM

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