

Addressing Violence Against Women in Politics

Regional Political Integrity Program for Southeastern Europe

Event summary

15-17 September 2022

The Conference on Addressing Violence Against Women in Politics, as part of the Regional Political Integrity Program for Southeastern Europe, was organised by ENoP member International Educational Centre (IEC) from Croatia, in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and with the support of another ENoP member, the Olof Palme Centre, as well as the Swedish Government. It was a three-day event that took place 15-17 September 2022, in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia.

The event was opened 16 September, with welcoming remarks from ENoP's Executive Director, Mana Livardjani, together with senior NDI representatives in the Western Balkan Region - Robert Scott Heaslet and Ana Radičević. The opening was followed by keynotes from Jovana Trenchevska, Minister of Labour and Social Policy of North Macedonia and Her Excellency Ami Larsson-Jain, Swedish Ambassador to North Macedonia.

The first session of the conference explored the international normative framework on violence against women in politics (VAWP) and effective ways on how to address such forms of gender-based violence. During their address, speakers Sara Haapalainen, Gender Adviser, OSCE/ODIHR, Poland, Nita Shala, Deputy Minister of Justice and National Coordinator Against Domestic Violence, Kosovo and Ana Stevanovic, International Secretary, Party of Justice and Freedom, Serbia talked about prevention, protection, prosecution, coordinated policies, the effects and impact of violence against women in politics. They underlined the importance of support for the fight against VAWP and the need to ensure safety and access to justice.

Titled "Everyone has a role to play," the second session role of Parliament, civil society, media, as well as religious organizations in addressing violence against women in the public space. Speakers included Elvedin Subasic, Preporod Journal, The Islamic Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Gordana Siljanovska - Davkova, MP from North Macedonia and President of the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Elena Dimushevskaa, Executive Director of National Network to End Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and TV-host and Editor-at-large, Ognjen Janeski, who is also the Western Balkans' No Hate Speech Ambassador to the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The third session explored the role men play in the fight for gender equality and how to counter stereotypes and traditional roles, imposed by societies. The session was opened by a video address from Bosnian author Nikola Vučić, who authored a book titled Toxic Masculinity, the first book on this topic published in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

After that followed an inspiring discussion between Stefan Andonovski, VMRO DPMNE International Secretary, Snezhana Kaleska - Vancheva, MP and Admirim Aliti, Minister of Information Society and Administration of North Macedonia. The fourth session was a discussion on the role of political parties in preventing VAWP with the participation of Sonja Lokar, Gender Advisor from Slovenia, Besima Boric, from the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Marija Miteva, VMRO-DPMNE Spokesperson from North Macedonia and Arbana Pasholli, MP (DUI, North Macedonia).

The last day had presentations and coaching sessions, that offered the participants tools and other practical solutions on how to address violence against women in politics and ensuring the safety of female politicians. As participants included a variety of women (and a few men) who were political and civil activists from the region and across the political spectrum, the event ensured engagement with relevant stakeholders important for properly addressing this topic that is crucial for equal representation of women in politics and healthy democracies.

The event was closed with a Regional Pledge to fight violence against women in politics (VAWP), made by all present participants, who pledged to continue their advocacy and fight for gender equality in the political life of the Western Balkans.