

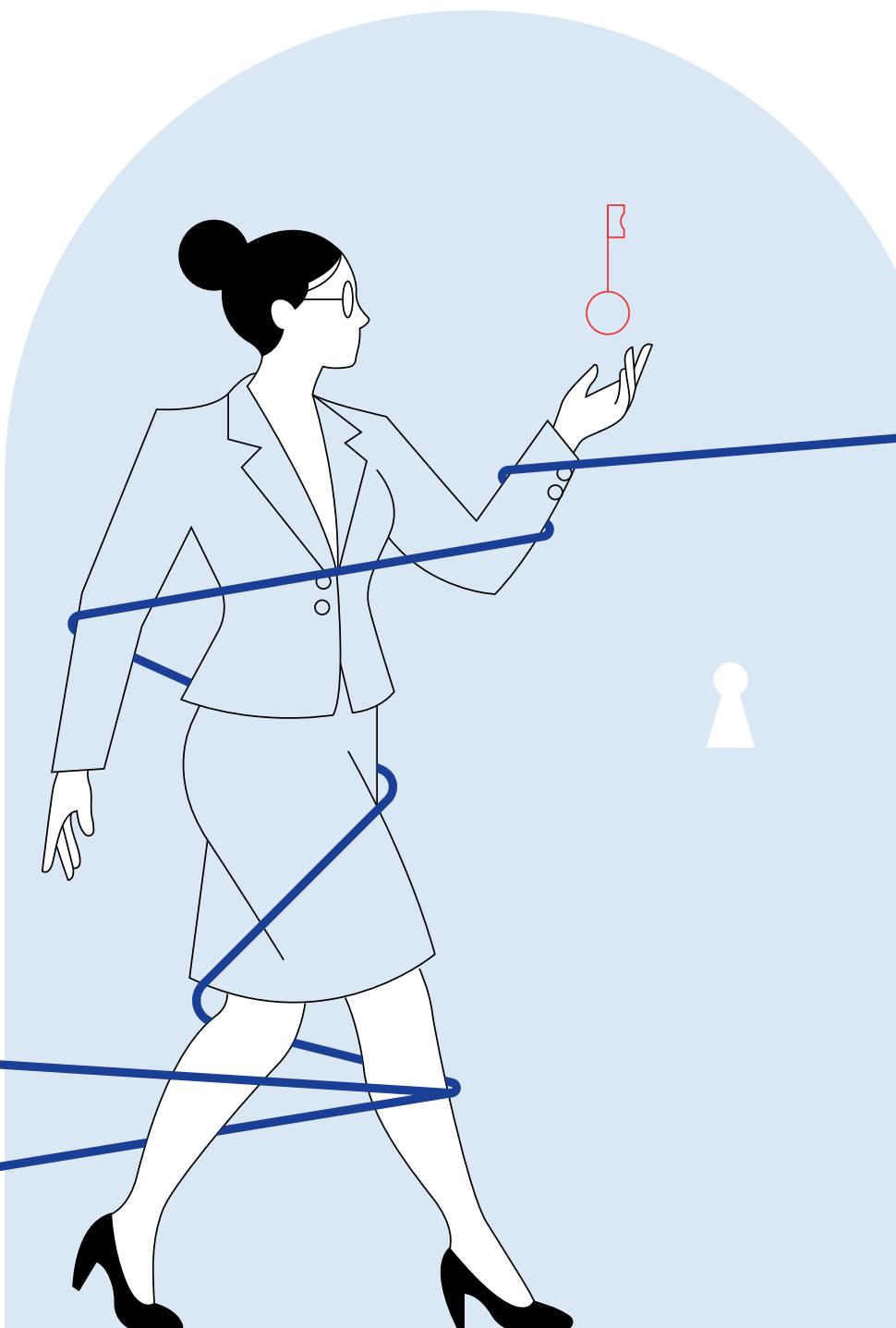


Зауставимо насиље  
*Остваримо равноправност*



ПОВЕРЕНИК ЗА  
ЗАШТИТУ  
РАВНОПРАВНОСТИ

# Special Report of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality on Discrimination against Women



Belgrade, 2025



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All terms used in the masculine grammatical gender encompass both male and female persons to whom they refer.



Brankica Janković  
Commissioner for Protection of Equality

## FOREWORD

Distinguished Members of Parliament, Respected Readers,

Women today are visible in all areas of life - they are more educated than ever, they participate significantly in the labor market, and they are present in politics, the media, culture, and the digital space. Yet, it would be wrong to turn a blind eye to the fact that, in many spheres of our society, an unwritten rule remains in force: presence is permitted, but the voice is limited.

This gap between formal equality and the actual position of women is the central theme of this Special Report on Discrimination Against Women. It comes a decade after the first special report on discrimination against women and represents a clear indicator of the continuity of the institution of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality - continuity in values, principles, and the commitment to clearly name, document, and monitor every violation of equality with concrete recommendations.

Over the past ten years, much has changed - the legislative framework has been improved, important strategic documents have been adopted, and new pathways have been opened for women's participation in politics, education, the economy, the media, and the digital space. At the same time, the complaints and inquiries received

by the Commissioner across various fields, as well as those regarding gender-based violence and harassment in public spaces, serve as a persistent reminder that stereotypes and prejudices remain deeply rooted and extend far beyond individual cases. This reminder is strongest in the public space, where women are too often disparaged and reduced to their bodies.

This report demonstrates that discrimination against women rarely occurs as an isolated incident. More often, it is a pattern - a systemic mode of operation that follows women through different stages of life: from career choices and entry into the labor market, through working conditions and advancement opportunities, to their media portrayal, participation in political and public life, and position in the digital environment. Girls and young women grow up with the message that they have "every opportunity," yet in their first jobs, upon deciding to become mothers, during the distribution of unpaid family labor, or when attempting to enter the sphere of decision-making, they often encounter invisible yet very real boundaries. Thus, inequality does not appear in the laws (although a discriminatory provision still occasionally "slips in"), but most often through practices and public policies.

Women work more but earn less; they are more educated but appear less frequently in decision-making positions; they bear the greater burden of caring for children, the elderly, and the household, yet that work remains invisible and unpaid. Although they constitute a significant portion of the workforce, they still face impermissible questions at job interviews, unstable forms of employment, pressure upon returning from maternity leave, and the "penalty" of motherhood. Their right to work is no longer in dispute - what is in dispute is their right to decide, to advance, and to be valued equally.

In political life, thanks to quotas, women are numerically more visible in parliament and representative bodies. However, this report shows that the voice of women is still often relativized, that they are exposed to sexist insults and disparagement, and that their participation in decision-making processes is frequently viewed as a formal fulfillment of an obligation, rather than as an equal and fundamentally important perspective for making decisions of significance to all citizens.

In the media and culture, significant space belongs to women, but often through stereotypical representations and a sensationalist approach, while they are underrepresented as equal interlocutors and experts. Reporting on violence against women remains susceptible to sensationalism, the relativization of perpetrator responsibility, and the secondary victimization of victims. The digital space, which promised a new freedom of expression, has for many women become a space of control, harassment, hate speech, and the abuse of intimate content, pointing to the need for strengthened protection and support.

It is particularly concerning that discrimination against women is most often deepened when it intersects with other personal characteristics - disability, national origin, age, sexual orientation, poverty, living in rural areas, or refugee and migrant status. The position of women who are at increased risk of discrimination often remains beyond the reach of public policies, and they are precisely the ones who first feel the consequences when the system fails to react in a timely and effective manner.

This report is not merely a review of the outcomes of proceedings regarding individual complaints and other citizen inquiries. It represents one of the institutional methods of revealing the structure of inequality - how stereotypes are maintained and spill over from one area to another, from education to the labor market, then into family life, from media content into the digital environment, and how the same patterns repeat in different spheres: from work and employment, education, health, and inheritance, to media, culture, politics, sports, security, and the digital space.

The Commissioner for Protection of Equality has been operating on the same foundations for 15 years - respect for human rights, the dignity of every individual, tolerance, and respect for diversity. During this period, special reports have been prepared on discrimination against the older persons, children, and persons with disabilities, as well as a special report on discrimination in the field of work and employment, alongside a large number of handbooks, publications, and anthologies. This special report on discrimination against women is a logical continuation of that continuity and, simultaneously, a clear message that women's equality is not a "finished topic," but a measure of our society's maturity.

This document was drafted based on inquiries from citizens, research, analysis of regulations, examples from everyday life, as well as cooperation with civil society organizations, the academic community, trade unions, employers, and international organizations. One fact is particularly important: the voice of many women, but also of men who do not accept inequality, is built into this report.

Our goal is not, nor is it possible, to list every injustice, but to show that they are not coincidences - to remind us that discrimination against women is prohibited by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Serbia, that as a state we have assumed international obligations through CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and European and other global standards, whereby the responsibility for their implementation lies with our institutions - from the local community to the national level.

This report offers not only a description of the problems but also recommendations to state authorities, local self-governments, employers, the media, educational and health institutions, the judiciary, the business community, and civil society, in accordance with their competencies and powers. The common message of all recommendations is that women's equality is not "charity" but a legal and human obligation; that violence against women, whether physical, economic, psychological, or digital, must not be tolerated or relativized; that unpaid work and care must be recognized and valued; that women must participate in decision-making wherever decisions about their lives are made; and that every institution must assume its share of responsibility for the outcome, not just for the regulations.

Inequality is not only an injustice for the one who suffers it, but also a loss for the whole society. This thought is confirmed by the experience of the Commissioner: where women are equal, societies are fairer, democracy is stronger, the economy is more stable, and trust in institutions is higher.

A decade after the first special report on discrimination against women, this document has a dual role. On the one hand, it shows what has been done - where we have progressed normatively, which systemic obstacles we have removed, and where the institutional response has been effective. On the other hand, it clearly indicates where we are still lagging, where resistance is strongest, where the voice of women is still silenced, and their presence is viewed as something that "had to be fulfilled," but not truly respected.

This report is not directed against any individual or institution. It is a call for partnership - for Members of Parliament, the Government, independent bodies, local self-governments, employers, the media, the academic community, and civil society to jointly assume responsibility so that every regulation, policy, and decision is truly in the service of equality.

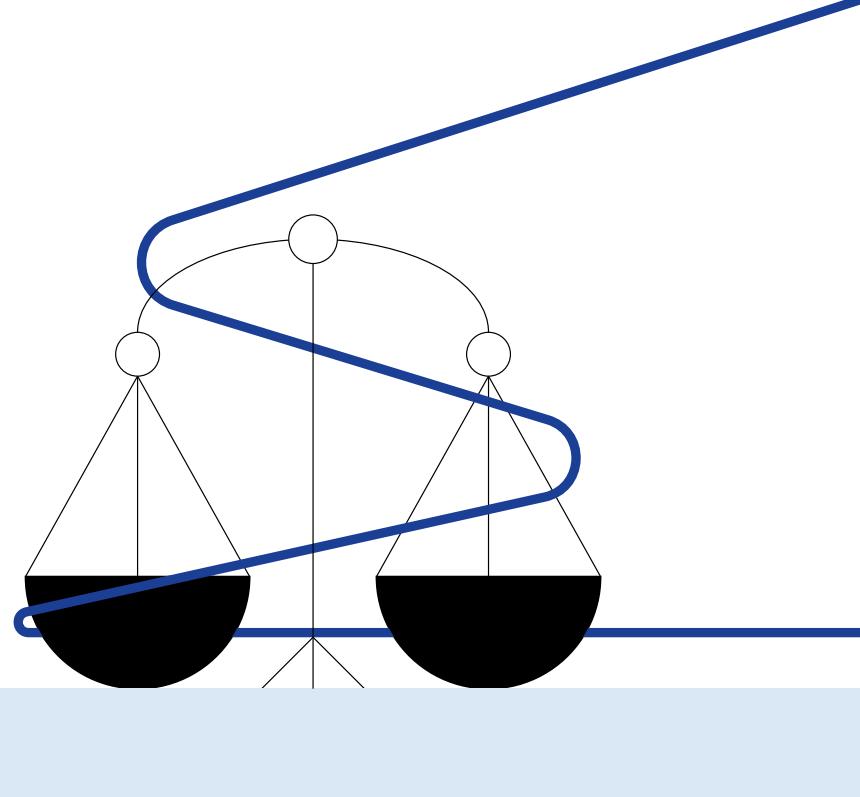
This report, which I submit at the end of my second mandate, represents another step toward a society where the presence of women is not merely allowed, but where their voice is heard equally and has full space in decision-making processes. I hope the National Assembly will recognize in it an opportunity to strengthen women's trust in institutions and yet another clear confirmation that discrimination is inadmissible, and that gender equality is a value that must be consistently encouraged and improved. The report may also be of use to the academic community, the media, civil society organizations, and international organizations in their work.

Women in Serbia are not an "interest group," but half the population, half the knowledge, work, care, and creativity of our society. Their full participation and unhindered, clear voice are not a threat, but a precondition for progress for all.

In conclusion, we do not need the formal presence of women, but a deep transformation of society and real equality. To use the language of sports - specifically football, an area where we need many more women and much more investment in women's sports—women should not merely be the ones passing or setting up the ball, but the ones scoring the goals, including the decisive ones.

Brankica Janković  
Commissioner for the Protection of Equality

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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„The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples.“

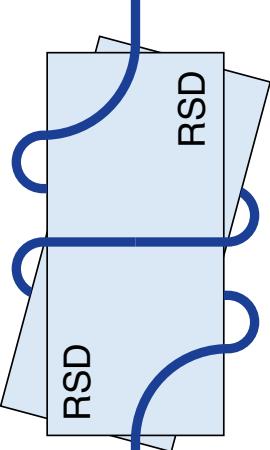
(Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Chapter III, Paragraph 1)

These words, written exactly 30 years ago, lay the foundation for understanding gender equality not only as a universal value but also as a process deeply rooted in women's historical struggle for visibility, voice, and equal rights. History demonstrates that rights were not a gift but the result of long-standing persistence, solidarity, and the constant demand by women for equality with men in all spheres of social life.

This path is recognizable in our society through constitutional provisions, laws, strategies, and numerous initiatives that have improved the position of women over the years. The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination establishes that discrimination based on sex or gender exists when the principle of gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men is violated in any sphere of life. This encompasses the denial of rights, placement in a disadvantageous position due to sex, gender, pregnancy, or childcare, as well as violence, harassment, and treatment based on gender stereotypes. Such phenomena violate dignity and undermine the foundations of equality.

Although the legal framework is solid, women in Serbia are still more frequently discriminated against in all areas of social life, a fact unequivocally confirmed by the practice of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality (hereinafter: the Commissioner), based on complaints and submissions from citizens. Bearing in mind the observed patterns of discrimination, the Commissioner produced a Special Report on Discrimination against Women in 2015, which analyzed the state of gender equality, highlighted positive developments, and clearly identified areas where women were exposed to inequality and marginalization. The report was submitted to the National Assembly on the Commissioner's own initiative, in accordance with the legal authority to do so when there are particularly important reasons.

A decade later, the Commissioner's data show the continuity of these problems: sex is among the most frequently cited grounds for discrimination, and in 2024 it was once again ranked first. The Commissioner's actions during the 2015–2025 period clearly confirm that women remain one of the most discriminated-against groups in Serbia in



almost all spheres of social life. Therefore, conditions have been met to, once again, determine, a decade after the first report, the existence of particularly important reasons for drafting a Special Report on Discrimination against Women.

The need for a new report has been further reinforced by recent circumstances: the growth of public resistance to equal opportunity policies and the temporary suspension of the Law on Gender Equality in 2024. Findings from international mechanisms - the Commissioner for Human Rights, the CEDAW Committee, and the GREVIO group - also point to problems in applying existing regulations and insufficient measures for countering gender stereotypes. This has further weakened citizens' trust in institutional protection. In this context, the Commissioner's data and women's experiences show that formal equality has not led to substantive equality, and that it is necessary to comprehensively re-examine barriers, consequences, and institutional responses.

The last decade has also brought new forms of discrimination, especially in the digital environment and the cultural-media space. The Commissioner's 2024 research showed that almost half of women believe that equality has not been achieved, citing social norms, insufficient implementation of laws, and limited access to justice as the biggest obstacles. The most vulnerable groups are Roma women, single mothers, women living in poverty, women with disabilities, and women from rural areas.

Therefore, this report relies on women's experiences, relevant research, and the extensive practice of the Commissioner, in order to clearly present real problems and systemic challenges requiring an institutional response.

Work and employment remain the areas where women most frequently seek protection from discrimination from the Commissioner. This high frequency stems from deeply rooted gender stereotypes that continue to guide educational choices and career paths: young women are concentrated in lower-paid sectors, while technical and better-paid fields remain predominantly in the hands of men. The consequences of such patterns are profound: limited employment opportunities in one's profession, working below one's qualification level, and slower career advancement.

Discrimination in employment is widely recognized: 92% of employers, 86% of the unemployed, and 84% of the employed confirm its existence. Although job advertisements specifying a particular sex have been almost eradicated thanks to the Commissioner's actions, gender-based discrimination is still present in job interviews—through questions about marital status, parenting plans, family obligations, and comments on appearance. In one case, it was established that a female candidate was not hired precisely after refusing to answer such a question. Women also testified to open conditioning and even dismissal after returning from maternity leave and childcare leave.

In the workplace, discrimination is most often reflected in unfavorable treatment regarding the conclusion or termination of contracts, denial of flexibility upon return from leave, obstacles to advancement due to sex, pregnancy, or family status, as well as sexual harassment. The gender pay gap remains persistent (in 2018, women were paid on average 8.8% less than men), with greater discrepancies across specific occupations.

The Commissioner's practice shows that structural barriers are deeply entrenched. Among other things, the Commissioner initiated regulatory changes to increase women's participation in management structures (in accordance with EU Directive 2022/2381), contributed to lifting public-sector employment restrictions that disproportionately affected women, and highlighted the need to remove age limits from professional development rulebooks. Additionally, through the "Code of Equality" and updated guidelines, a comprehensive model for employers was offered, ranging from internal procedures to self-assessment questionnaires and training.

In 2021, the Supreme Court of Cassation, acting on the Commissioner's lawsuit, determined that the dismissal of a female worker suffering from leukemia solely due to her health condition constituted discrimination.

Sexual harassment remains one of the most widespread forms of discrimination at work. Two out of five women have experienced some form of it, and in 74% of cases, the perpetrators are persons at a higher hierarchical level. Reasons for non-reporting include fear, shame, and distrust of institutions. Multiple and intersectional discrimination in the labor market particularly affects women with disabilities, Roma women, and LBT+ women. In one case before the Commissioner, a Roma woman was told at her workplace: "Go back to the tent settlement you came from." Transgender women are most often eliminated as early as the application phase. Young women face high levels of insecurity and major obstacles to first employment: one-third work without a contract or outside their profession, and 66.9% cite the unavailability or high cost of kindergartens as a key obstacle to returning to the labor market. Women over 45 most often become invisible in the labor market, while rural women continue to work as unpaid "assisting" household members, in 74% of cases without contracts, social protection, or rights.

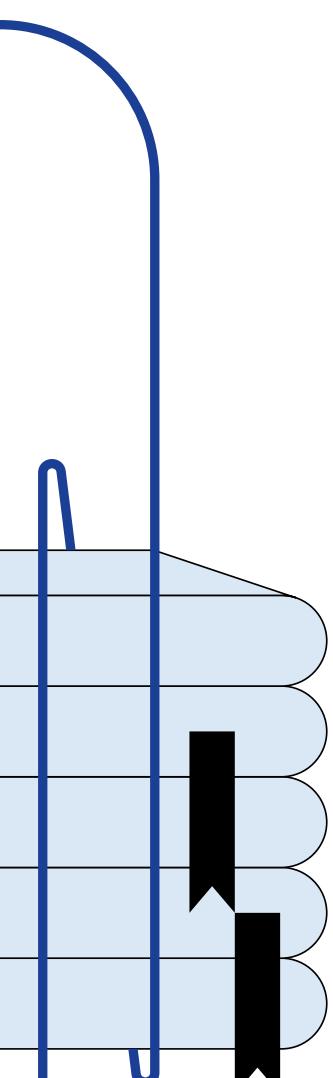
In the labour market, the practice persists of viewing younger women primarily through the lens of future motherhood, which employers often perceive as a "risk." This attitude leads directly to impermissible questions regarding marital status and parenting plans, and to the selection of candidates based on personal characteristics, contrary to the law. The Commissioner established discrimination in one company due to an online form that unjustifiably required information on the candidate's marital status. Such stereotypes fuel the most common forms of discrimination against pregnant women and women on maternity leave - dismissals, non-renewal of contracts, transfers to lower or distant positions, and hindered advancement. Women illustrate this with the words: "Since I became a mother, I have also become invisible." The Commissioner also established discrimination in a case where an employer failed to renew an employee's contract after learning of her pregnancy. Data show that 28% of pregnant women do not receive statutory benefits, and 16% of women were forced to return early from leave.

Seemingly neutral measures often lead to indirect discrimination. The application of "solidarity taxation" to arrears paid after maternity leave resulted in financial detriment to an employee through no fault of her own; in this case, the Commissioner found indirect discrimination and recommended eliminating the consequences of such discriminatory treatment. Furthermore, the Commissioner pointed out to employers that a break in performance evaluation during maternity and childcare leave cannot be grounds for preventing advancement; rather, evaluations before and after leave must be treated as continuous. Pregnant women and mothers who are entrepreneurs or work under contracts outside the employment relationship are in a more difficult position. Their rights are not equal to those of employed women, which is why the Commissioner initiated amendments to the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children to equalise the status of entrepreneurs and women working outside employment relationships with that of employed women.

Through strategic litigation conducted before the courts, the Commissioner addressed the practice of conditioning employed women with blank mutual termination agreements signed in advance "in case of pregnancy." In 2023, the Supreme Court confirmed that dismissal due to pregnancy or maternity leave constitutes discrimination and is inadmissible.

Discrimination also affects women in common-law unions, divorced women, widows, and single mothers through legal loopholes, stigma, and unfavourable treatment. In the case of a single mother whose employment was terminated due to her use of sick leave to care for a sick child, the Commissioner established discrimination based on sex and family status.

The unequal distribution of unpaid work remains one of the greatest sources of gender



inequality. Estimates show that, if monetised, unpaid work would be worth 21.5% of Serbia's GDP, with women performing nearly three-quarters of it. The consequences are chronic fatigue, limited career advancement opportunities, and excessive burden due to a lack of institutional support.

Regarding inheritance, 44% of women renounce their inheritance in favour of male relatives under the pressure of custom. The Commissioner submitted an initiative to the Chamber of Notaries to warn women of the consequences of renunciation, as well as public campaigns to raise awareness of women's full right to inheritance. These patterns show how deeply rooted stereotypes shape the course of women's lives—from property to education.

Education is the foundation of equality, yet it remains one of the areas where gender inequality persists most. Although the normative framework guarantees equal rights, practice shows that the system still fails to provide full and equal opportunities. Early school leaving, particularly among Roma girls, segregation of children from vulnerable groups, gender stereotypes in teaching, and sexual harassment of female students point to deeply ingrained patterns. Particularly concerning is the fact that 43% of Roma girls aged 15-19 drop out of school due to early marriage. Discriminatory practices continue to appear in schools - from inappropriate comments by teachers to textbook content that encourages prejudice, indicating that institutional protection is not yet consistently applied in all educational environments. In one case, the Commissioner established discrimination by a teacher who violated a female student's dignity by commenting on her appearance.

Gender-based segregation in education begins with the choice of schools and continues into higher education. Women are still pushed out of better-paid technical and ICT fields, and a "glass ceiling" persists in academic careers: although women comprise the majority of graduates and PhD holders, they are underrepresented in management structures and are significantly less likely to gain access to research funds and mentorship. In this regard, the Commissioner regularly reacts to practices that lead to direct or indirect discrimination against women and girls in education. In a case involving the denial of a scholarship to a female student who was late in enrolling due to pregnancy and maternity leave, indirect discrimination was established, and a recommendation was made to revise the ranking conditions. In another case, the denial of professional training to a pregnant woman was established as discrimination based on sex and family status. These educational patterns directly affect the visibility and participation of women in public and political life: unequal opportunities in schooling and advancement are reflected in later positioning within power structures.

Politics has long been an arena of almost total male domination. Although the Constitution and laws guarantee equality, patriarchal patterns, stereotypes, and the public climate continue to limit the real influence of women in decision-making processes. The representation of women in government institutions is growing but remains uneven: women comprise 38% of MPs in the National Assembly and nine out of thirty members of the Government, while at the local level, only 13.3% of mayors and municipal presidents are women. Thus, the Commissioner established discrimination during the appointment of the executive body of a municipality that included no women and recommended measures to ensure equality.

Quotas have indeed increased the number of women in Parliament, but their influence has remained limited. Women are still concentrated in "female" portfolios, while men dominate security, internal affairs, and the economy. Statements by female politicians confirm this: "Women in politics are perceived as ornaments (...) a woman must not be autonomous." Sexist attitudes toward women in politics are still visible in the public sphere. The Commissioner established discrimination in cases of offensive statements made during a session of a municipal assembly where a female mayor was called a "hysterical, bloated old woman," as well as regarding the humiliation of female politicians via the media ("you haven't found the right one yet"). The institution has repeatedly warned against offensive rhetoric directed at

female ministers and MPs and called for the consistent application of the Code of Conduct for MPs and zero tolerance for hate speech.

Gender inequality also characterises the public sector beyond politics. It is visible in the symbolic space—in Belgrade, only about 4% of streets are named after women, which is why the Commissioner sent an initiative to the City of Belgrade to name and mark streets, squares, and buildings after notable women. Also, following the Commissioner's recommendation, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) increased the number of women in its membership and amended its statutes to achieve more balanced representation. In sports, differences in rewards, funding, and media visibility between men and women remain significant. The Commissioner thus established discrimination due to unequal scoring of female and male selections and recommended the abolition of such practice, as well as the adoption of a strategy for the development of women's sports. Although progress is visible, substantive equality of women in politics, public life, and sports requires deeper institutional changes—incorporating a gender perspective into all phases of decision-making and resource distribution, and special support for women who are at greater risk of multiple and intersectional discrimination.

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The representation of women in the media continues to be marked by gender stereotypes, limited visibility, and reduction to traditional social roles. Women are more often depicted through their appearance, emotionality, and private roles than as experts, decision-makers, or active participants in public life. Practices of sensationalism, disparagement, and sexualisation of women have been recorded in television and digital formats, where women have frequently been exposed to offensive comparisons, trivialisation of violence, and questioning of their professional competence. Digital media and online comments further amplify misogynistic speech and normalise discriminatory attitudes. In several cases, the Commissioner recommended removing contentious content, issuing public apologies, and organizing training for journalists and editorial boards.

Reporting on violence against women remains an area with a high risk of secondary victimisation. The tabloid approach, sensationalism, disclosure of personal data, and focus on the victim's "private life" relativise the perpetrators' responsibility and violate women's dignity. However, it is necessary to note that progress has been achieved, both through the Commissioner's actions and the activities of the informal group "Journalists Against Violence". In this regard, the Commissioner has repeatedly warned the public that freedom of expression does not imply a right to humiliation, and has called on the media to respect the Code of Ethics of Journalists and ethical standards. Of particular concern are online attacks on female journalists, which are often misogynistic, accompanied by threats, and lack an adequate institutional response.

Sexism is also present in advertising, where women are reduced to body parts or used

as "metaphors for goods." The Commissioner has repeatedly established discrimination and recommended the adoption of an equality code in the advertising industry. Similar patterns exist in culture: women are less frequently found in creative and leadership positions in film, theater, and music, and research shows that they are often exposed to inappropriate speech, unwanted touching, and other forms of gender-based violence. Along with the underestimation of their competencies and the burden of dual roles - at work and in the family - women face chronic fatigue and limited opportunities for professional advancement.

In addition to acting on individual complaints, the Commissioner develops preventive and educational mechanisms to improve gender equality in media and culture: manuals and training for journalists, conferences, exhibitions, and partnerships with cultural institutions and academia, as well as recommendations for measures to achieve equality, demonstrating that institutional will can increase women's visibility and participation in culture. Media and culture play a key role in shaping social values and attitudes toward gender equality. The way women are portrayed influences perceptions of their roles in society, politics, and the economy. Therefore, consistent gender mainstreaming of content, balanced presence of women across all topics, and the elimination of sexism are necessary prerequisites for a safe, dignified, and just public space.

Gender-based violence represents the most severe form of discrimination against women and constitutes a systemic pattern of control and unequal power relations based on stereotypes of female subordination and the duty of obedience. It encompasses physical, psychological, sexual, verbal, and socio-economic violence, occurring in both private and public spheres, often simultaneously in multiple forms, with the gravest outcome being femicide - the killing of a woman simply because she is a woman. The Commissioner's practice shows that sexist and misogynistic statements by public officials and the trivialization of violence undermine women's dignity and discourage victims from seeking protection; in such cases, the Commissioner has established harassment and degrading treatment and issued recommendations to eliminate the consequences of discriminatory conduct.

International standards, established by the Istanbul Convention and the UN Declaration, clearly define violence against women as any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts and arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Serbia has ratified the Istanbul Convention and established a substantial legal framework, but implementation remains uneven. Mandatory training for employees in social work centres is lacking, institutional prejudices and phenomena of secondary victimisation of victims are observed, while the criminal justice system regarding sexual violence is not yet aligned with the consent standard. Therefore, the Commissioner initiated amendments to the Criminal Code to define the criminal offense of rape based on the lack of consent, to abolish outdated terminology regarding the criminal offense of illicit sexual acts against a vulnerable person, and to consider introducing femicide as a distinct criminal offense.

Research shows that violence against women remains widespread - women are most frequently exposed to psychological, intimate partner, and sexual violence, as well as stalking. Women's testimonies point to the long duration and "normalisation" of controlling behaviour, as well as fear becoming part of daily life. The lack of a unified national registry, especially regarding femicide, prevents comprehensive monitoring and prevention, which is why the Commissioner supported civil society organizations and submitted an initiative to establish a national control mechanism for analyzing femicide cases. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed system vulnerabilities - limited service availability and the need for emergency protocols—to which the Commissioner responded with recommendations to the Government.

The main obstacles to reporting violence, according to findings from the Commissioner's research, are fear of the abuser, shame, economic and housing dependence, distrust of institutions, and the perception of violence as a "family matter." This research also shows an insufficient level of trust in the system: positive experiences encourage readiness to report, while a lack of trust and insufficient information deter women from seeking help. Support from family and the environment, economic independence, and a sensitive institutional response are key to breaking the cycle of violence.

Women suffering from multiple and intersectional discrimination - women with disabilities, Roma women, rural women, older women, as well as LBT+ women, migrant women, and asylum seekers - are particularly exposed to gender-based violence. They additionally face inaccessible and unavailable services, stigma, poverty, and distrust of institutions. Therefore, the Commissioner conducted training for police, social work centers, and other services, issued recommendations for the equal availability of services (shelters, SOS hotlines, support for victims of sexual violence), and pointed out the need to amend the definition of rape in accordance with the consent standard, ensure fairer penal policy, and allocate greater budget resources for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Special attention was paid to protecting the privacy of asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking, and to the economic empowerment of women in rural areas.

Digital gender-based violence represents a continuation of "old violence" in a new space. Anonymity, the ease of creating new accounts, and insufficient digital literacy among some women allow perpetrators almost unlimited access to victims, while incomplete regulations and inefficient enforcement of existing ones leave victims without effective protection. The Commissioner continuously points out that impunity encourages perpetrators and demands a clearer legal framework and efficient action by all competent authorities. The prevalence of digital violence is high and affects younger women the most. According to UN Women data, more than half of women in Serbia have experienced some form of digital violence, accompanied by strong self-blame and the perception that perpetrators do not face consequences. Research also shows that more than half of high school girls have experienced digital violence, while only a small number would report such an attack to competent institutions. As an example of an effective institutional response, the Commissioner filed a criminal complaint regarding offensive and misogynistic comments posted below an article on femicide, in which individuals justified violence against women.

The abuse of intimate images and recordings without consent (so-called "revenge porn") represents a severe blow to women's privacy, dignity, and bodily autonomy. The Commissioner advocates for terminological precision and the introduction of a new criminal offense that would also encompass deepfakes, as the current framework does not recognize the specificities of digital sexual violence, and proceedings often boil down to private lawsuits by the victim. Data from civil society organizations and women's narratives point to deep psychosocial consequences and the fact that content remains accessible for a long time, prolonging victimization. Therefore, the Commissioner initiated amendments to the Criminal Code and, in practice, recommended that educational institutions establish protection protocols and preventive programs.

Online harassment and gender-based hate speech include offensive messages, the spreading of untruths, degrading comments, and visual content that intimidates and silences women in public spaces. In cases where insults and degrading comments have been directed at women in public life on social media, the Commissioner has condemned such attacks in the strongest terms and reminded the public that everyone has the right to personal dignity and privacy. She particularly emphasized that women have the full right to make decisions about their own lives without judgment, stigmatization, or public disparagement. In a case against an MP who disparaged feminists by comparing them to animals, the Commissioner found harassment and recommended the removal of the content and refraining from statements that insult the dignity of women. In a case against a lawyer who made

sexist and degrading comments on social media about the complainant's appearance, the Commissioner found harassment and recommended a public apology and compliance with regulations.

The responsibility of media and platforms represents a key line of defense. Acting on complaints regarding the incitement of hatred and discrimination in comments, the Commissioner recommended that internet portals introduce clear moderation procedures, remove contentious content, and act in accordance with anti-discrimination standards, emphasising that ethical principles must also be applied on social media. As a preventive tool, the Commissioner, in cooperation with UNFPA, launched the campaign "Bodyright – Your body is yours, both online and in the real world" and created a Glossary of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, so that these phenomena could be recognised earlier and victims could access support more quickly.

The position of women at risk of intersectional discrimination is determined by deeply rooted stereotypes and systemic barriers in education, employment, health, social protection, and access to services. The Commissioner's practice shows that institutional measures ostensibly designed to "protect" women often produce the opposite effect—marginalization and denial of rights. Thus, it was established that conditioning the validation of a health insurance card for a woman with a disability on the deprivation of her legal capacity was discriminatory and contrary to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In other cases, educational institutions and commissions for the assessment of work ability placed women with disabilities in a humiliating position through a lack of support, patronizing comments, and disregard for their dignity. Women with mental disabilities in residential institutions are particularly vulnerable, where limitations on privacy and an increased risk of violence are recorded.

Roma women face multiple forms of discrimination—as women and as members of a national minority. Anti-Gypsyism as a form of racism remains deeply present: in education through segregation, in employment through rejection and unfavorable working conditions, and in everyday life through denied services and degrading treatment. The Commissioner established discrimination in the case of offensive messages sent by a director to an employed Roma woman. Also, in a case against a centre for social work, it was found that the lack of response to early marriages constituted a failure to protect children and discrimination against Roma girls, with a clear message that early marriages represent a form of gender-based violence. Lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women often face gender-based violence and harassment in various spheres of social life. The Commissioner found discrimination in several cases—from insults and expulsion from hospitality establishments to media content that insulted and humiliated LBT+ women.

The Commissioner's research shows that 80% of older women believe that society does not take sufficient account of their circumstances. Discrimination in the area of services was found in two proceedings: an insurance company refused to issue travel insurance to persons over 75, and a bank refused cash loans to persons over 80. The Commissioner recommended the abolition of age limits and the introduction of individual risk assessment. Refugee and migrant women face control within the family, language and administrative barriers, and limited access to education, health, and protection. The Commissioner continuously points out the obligation to provide migrant women with comprehensive protection from gender-based violence, equal access to services, stable interpretation services, inclusion of girls and young women in education, and support for their economic integration. Women in rural areas bear the burden of property inequality, invisible and unpaid work, poorly organized or unavailable transport, and limited access to health and social protection services. The Commissioner's research and programs show that local self-governments do not sufficiently recognize discrimination against rural women. In this context, the Commissioner conducted educational sessions, provided mentoring support, and funded equipment for women in agriculture to support their economic empowerment. Systemic, cross-sectoral responses are still needed—infrastructure,

accessible services, and local policies that treat the equality of rural women as a prerequisite for social development. The experiences of women in rural areas, as well as migrant women and older women, point to the same pattern—when institutions do not recognize specific barriers, access to services suffers first. This is particularly evident in the health care system, where women make up the majority of both users and employees but have limited influence on decision-making.

Research shows low trust among women in the health system and a persistent pattern of the so-called “obedient female patient.” The Commissioner’s practice further points to concrete cases of discrimination. Thus, a gynecologist refused to examine a pregnant woman with temporary residence in Serbia, citing a “language barrier,” although she had no difficulties communicating with other doctors. In another case, an insurance company charged women a higher premium for voluntary health insurance than men of the same age and health status—the Commissioner found direct discrimination and recommended the abolition of unequal premiums. The Commissioner also submitted initiatives aligned with European standards—reducing VAT on menstrual products and expanding the list of contraceptives covered by the Republic Fund for Health Insurance (RFZO)—starting from the position that menstrual dignity and reproductive health are integral parts of women’s human rights.

Women’s sexual and reproductive health remains under the influence of conservative attitudes and gender inequality. Modern contraception is used by only about one-fifth of women, while unwanted and adolescent pregnancies remain high, especially in Roma settlements. Institutional reactions are often inconsistent—pregnancies of Roma girls are frequently justified by “custom,” instead of being recognised as a severe violation of the rights of the child. Discrimination against LBT+ women has also been observed. The Institute for Student Health Care requested a declaration of sexual orientation in a questionnaire for systematic examinations, in violation of the law. In another case, a gynecologist refused to examine a patient after learning that she had relations with women, accompanied by degrading comments. In both cases, the Commissioner found discrimination and recommended remedying the violation and complying with regulations.

Inhumane and inadequate treatment of pregnant women and women in labor in gynecological-obstetrics clinics, better known as obstetric violence, remains one of the most pronounced forms of institutional discrimination against women. Verbal humiliation, interventions without informed consent, and even suturing without anesthesia have been recorded, along with a chronic lack of information and support. The Commissioner recommended that gynecological-obstetrics institutions ensure humane treatment, the presence of a companion, psychological support, and improved conditions, and that the Ministry of Health strengthen inspection oversight, revise good-practice guides, and improve standards of communication with patients. In the field of medically assisted reproduction (MAR), the legal framework still favors couples over single women. Research shows that the majority of women are left without any contact or support after a failed MAR attempt, indicating the need for post-procedural support services.

As in other areas, the position is most difficult for women at greater risk of discrimination. Access to health services for women with disabilities is often limited due to inaccessible infrastructure, degrading assessments, and communication “through a companion,” which has been established as discrimination in multiple proceedings. Roma women face early pregnancies, poverty, degrading treatment in maternity wards, and limited access to services. Older women, especially in rural areas, remain without health care due to poverty, unavailable transport, and long waiting lists.

Bearing in mind all of the above, and for the purpose of effectively suppressing discrimination against women and establishing effective gender equality, the Commissioner has, through this special report, issued recommendations to competent authorities and organizations for the advancement of gender equality and the suppression of discrimination against women in all areas covered by the report.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND SUPPRESSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

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For the purpose of effectively suppressing discrimination against women and establishing effective gender equality, it is necessary to:

General recommendations for advancing women's equality:

- When adopting regulations and public policies, it is necessary to conduct an assessment of the impact of such regulations or policies on women's rights, as well as their compliance with the constitutional principle of gender equality (public authorities at all levels).
- Continuously undertake activities aimed at deconstructing stereotypical gender roles, especially in the public sphere, strengthen control mechanisms, and increase the number of information campaigns, events, and content regarding gender equality (public authorities and organizations at all levels, media, and other social actors).
- Continuously implement educational programs aimed at recognizing discrimination and discriminatory attitudes, hate speech, misogyny, sexism, and sexual harassment, and provide familiarization with legal mechanisms for protection against discrimination. Educational programs should cover employees in public authorities and actors in all areas of social life, especially in the public sphere (National Academy for Public Administration, Judicial Academy, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Ministry of Education, etc.).
- Amend the Law on Inheritance to ensure the right of common-law partners to inheritance and equal legal treatment of marital and common-law unions; conduct comprehensive and continuous educational programs and public campaigns on women's right to equal inheritance and equal treatment in property relations, with a special focus on rural areas, the older population, and the deconstruction of stereotypes presenting women's renunciation of inheritance as a family and moral obligation (Ministry of Justice; Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Education; local self-government units; media).
- Amend the Family Law so that the guardianship authority, in the event of the death of a single parent, when appointing a guardian for the child, in addition to the principle of the best interests of the child, is obliged to take into account the possibly expressed will of the deceased parent in order to respect family relations, continuity of care, and the stability of the child after the loss of a parent (Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, Ministry of Justice).

- Re-examine the exclusionary condition in the Law on Social Protection for exercising the right to financial social assistance in the event of renunciation of inheritance. Improve information regarding rights and the consequences of renouncing inheritance (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Chamber of Notaries, public notaries);
- Draft strategic documents and action plans whose validity has expired or is expiring, such as the Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2021-2025 (line ministries as proposers);
- Improve the position of rural women through continuous and comprehensive support that takes into account their specific needs and the demographic structure of rural areas; ensure better access to justice, social and health protection; encourage employment and entrepreneurship of rural women, and strengthen measures for the effective prevention of gender-based violence in rural areas (all authorities and organizations);
- Improve public transport and complete infrastructure in rural areas to ensure equal access to health, educational, social, and administrative services, with regular and reliable lines and subsidized transport measures for women and girls in remote settlements (Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; local self-government units).

Recommendations for improving equality in specific areas of social life:

Labour Market and Pension and Disability Insurance:

- Implement campaigns and programmes aimed at empowering women to recognise and report discrimination during the recruitment process and at work (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, National Employment Service).
- Implement campaigns aimed at encouraging women to report sexual and gender-based harassment, as well as training for employers and employees on prevention, recognition, and action in such cases (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Labour Inspectorate).
- Amend the Law on Companies, the Law on Public Enterprises, and the Law on Management of Companies Owned by the Republic of Serbia to gradually introduce quotas for the underrepresented sex in the management bodies of companies, as well as the obligation for companies to regularly report on the gender structure of their management bodies, in accordance with Directive (EU) 2022/2381 (Ministry of Economy).
- Improve the legislative framework in the field of labour to ensure pay transparency and prevent the gender pay gap, in accordance with Directive (EU) 2023/970 on equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; prescribe the obligation for employers to regularly report on gender pay gaps, as well as the right of employees to information on pay levels for their position (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs).
- Ratify Convention No. 190 of the International Labour Organisation with the aim of establishing a system of zero tolerance for violence and harassment in the world of

work (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs).

- Encourage the employment of women, especially younger women and those over 50, Roma women, women with disabilities, and other women at greater risk of discrimination, as well as the development of women's entrepreneurship and agricultural holdings (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Rural Welfare, National Employment Service, local self-government and territorial autonomy units, employers).
- Intensify inspection supervision in the work and employment process regarding the violation of equal opportunities for establishing an employment relationship or enjoying all rights in the field of labour under equal conditions, especially regarding the prevention of undeclared work and "cash-in-hand" payments, as well as sexual harassment (Labour Inspectorate).
- Direct population policy measures toward the equal participation of men in care, child-rearing, and household chores, as well as in the use of the right to leave work for childcare. Concurrently, in the process of harmonisation with European Union regulations, align provisions on paternity leave with the EU Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers (Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; local self-government units).
- Equalize the rights of women who are self-employed, female farmers, or working on the basis of contracts outside the employment relationship with the position of women employed by an employer regarding all benefits and allowances based on childbirth, childcare, and special childcare, and harmonize all regulations in this regard (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, etc.).
- Equalise the position of fathers of children whose mothers are self-employed with that of fathers of children whose mothers are employed by an employer through amendments to the Law on Financial Support to Families with Children (Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, etc.).
- Improve labour regulations regarding the more detailed regulation of remote work, flexible working hours, work outside the employment relationship, seasonal work, and other provisions aimed at improving the position of employed women, reconciling work and parenthood, etc. (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs).
- Harmonise labour legislation with the principle of equality so that rights such as paid leave in the case of childbirth, illness, or death of a partner are also available to persons living in common-law unions (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs).
- Improve regulations in the field of pension and disability insurance so that the right to a survivor's pension after the death of a common-law partner is exercised under equal conditions as for marital partners (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs).
- Develop comprehensive support measures for single parents through improving access to childcare services and employment programmes (Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, local self-government units).

Education:

- Improve formal and non-formal education programmes for young people on gender equality, respect, and non-violent communication, including topics on sexual harassment and responsibility for behaviour in interpersonal relationships; ensure continuous campaigns in higher education institutions promoting a culture of respect and equality (Ministry of Education, educational institutions, universities, media).
- Harmonise regulations in the field of education with anti-discrimination and gender-sensitive standards, so that professional development programmes for teachers and educators include training on gender equality, prohibition of discrimination, and violence prevention; ensure that the licensing of teaching staff is conditional on completed training in these areas (Ministry of Education, Institute for the Improvement of Education).
- Implement measures to prevent school dropouts, with a special focus on the Roma community, through the development of inclusive educational programmes, scholarships, and mentoring support; ensure consistent implementation of measures to prevent early and forced marriages, as well as strengthening cooperation between schools, police, social work centres, and Roma mediators to keep girls in the education system (Ministry of Education, Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Ministry of Family Welfare and Demography, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Interior).
- Implement measures to encourage equal representation of women in academic life, especially in management and research positions, through the introduction of gender equality policies within universities and scientific institutes; ensure equal access to research funding, participation in scientific networks and decision-making, as well as mentorship and support programmes for young female researchers (Ministry of Education, Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, universities, and scientific institutions).
- Establish a unified university policy for prevention and protection from sexual harassment, applicable to all faculties and higher education institutions; ensure clear procedures for reporting, victim protection, and perpetrator accountability, as well as regular training for teaching and non-teaching staff on prevention and action in cases of sexual harassment; encourage all universities to adopt and implement gender equality plans (Ministry of Education, universities, National Council for Higher Education).
- Implement measures to foster equal opportunities in accessing academic careers for women belonging to groups at greater risk of discrimination, including women with disabilities, Roma women, and women from rural areas (Ministry of Education, Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, universities, and scientific institutions).
- Work on the deconstruction of gender segregation in educational profiles, which further reproduces stereotypes about "female" and "male" occupations, and encourage the inclusion of girls and young women in educational programs and professions where there is a small number of women, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation).

#### Participation in Political and Public Life:

- Improve electoral legislation by introducing quotas ensuring representation of the underrepresented sex of 50% at all levels (Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue).
- Ensure balanced representation of women and men in all public authority bodies and organisations, especially in decision-making positions, including the security sector, accompanied by a gender-balanced personnel policy, gender-sensitive statistics, and measures supporting the inclusion of women at greater risk of discrimination (ministries; local self-government units).
- Integrate a gender perspective into all phases of the political process, from recruitment and candidacy to decision-making and resource allocation; improve intra-party mechanisms for supporting women through education, mentorship programs, and financial support for women's initiatives; pay special attention to the inclusion of women facing multiple and intersectional discrimination, such as Roma women, women with disabilities, older women, and women from rural areas, in party structures and electoral processes (Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, political parties, local self-government units).
- Encourage the City of Belgrade and all local self-government units to name streets, squares, and other public spaces after notable women in order to increase the visibility of their contribution to society (local self-government units; commissions for street naming; Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government; Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue).
- Envisage measures related to the development of women's sports, its promotion at all levels, the prevention of gender-based violence and sexual harassment of female athletes and women employed in sports, as well as greater investment in women's sports (Ministry of Sports).

#### Media and Culture:

- Ensure consistent application of existing professional and ethical standards in reporting on violence against women, including femicide, with intensified supervision and sanctioning of media that violate the Code of Ethics of Journalists of Serbia and guidelines for ethical reporting; encourage media to promote respect for the dignity of victims and intolerance towards all forms of gender-based violence instead of sensationalism (Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media, Press Council, journalists' associations, media);
- Improve measures for the protection and empowerment of women in the media sector, including the establishment of clear procedures for preventing and reporting sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence; improve working conditions for female journalists through flexible work policies, accessible childcare services, and equal representation of women in decision-making positions in the media (Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, media outlets, journalists' associations).
- Ensure equal participation of women in management positions in cultural institutions through the application of gender equality principles in selection and appointment procedures, as well as the development of mentorship and professional empowerment programs for women in the cultural sector; introduce regular monitoring and reporting on the gender structure of employees and managers in cultural institutions (Ministry of Culture, local self-government units, cultural institutions).

- Ensure that the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM), within the scope of its competencies, consistently takes into account the gender perspective in all media practices and policies.

Gender-Based Violence against Women:

- Amend the Criminal Code regarding the definition of sexual violence based on the concept of lack of consent, prescribe a specific offense of femicide, abuse and publication of sexually explicit content, including deepfakes (Ministry of Justice).
- Amend the Criminal Code to abolish Article 179 ("illicit sexual acts against a vulnerable person") and ensure the protection of persons unable to resist under Article 178 as a more severe form of the criminal offense of rape; harmonize legal terminology with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and modern anti-discrimination standards to eliminate terms that stigmatize persons with disabilities and ensure equal criminal law protection for all victims (Ministry of Justice).
- Amend the Law on Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions by prescribing the obligation of competent authorities to officially notify the victim of the convict's release or escape from prison in cases of gender-based and domestic violence, as well as human trafficking (Ministry of Justice).
- Amend the Law on Public Order and Peace regarding the modification of the misdemeanour penalising sex workers, by prescribing punishment only for the service user, while developing support for women who have left and/or wish to leave prostitution, as well as for victims of human trafficking (Ministry of Interior).
- Ensure full implementation of the GREVIO group recommendations for the consistent application of the Istanbul Convention, with special emphasis on institutional coordination, ensuring sufficient and effective resources for victim protection, and monitoring the effects of measures; regularly report to the public on progress in implementing recommendations and improve cooperation with civil society organizations providing support to victims (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, etc.).
- Organise regular meetings of the Council for the Suppression of Domestic Violence and ensure the continuous implementation of the Council's activities in accordance with its competencies (Ministry of Justice).
- Establish a national control mechanism for monitoring femicide cases, improve synchronised and coordinated action of all actors on the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, and timely sanction perpetrators (competent ministries and the Council for the Suppression of Domestic Violence).
- Improve the capacities of all authorities and institutions acting in cases of gender-based violence, including digital violence, through specialized and continuous training on victim needs, prevention of secondary victimization, and an approach based on respect for human dignity, while strengthening the capacities of the Special Prosecution Office for High-Tech Crime and improving cross-sectoral cooperation between the police, prosecution, courts, and civil society for more effective victim protection (Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Republic Public Prosecutor's Office; Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Belgrade).

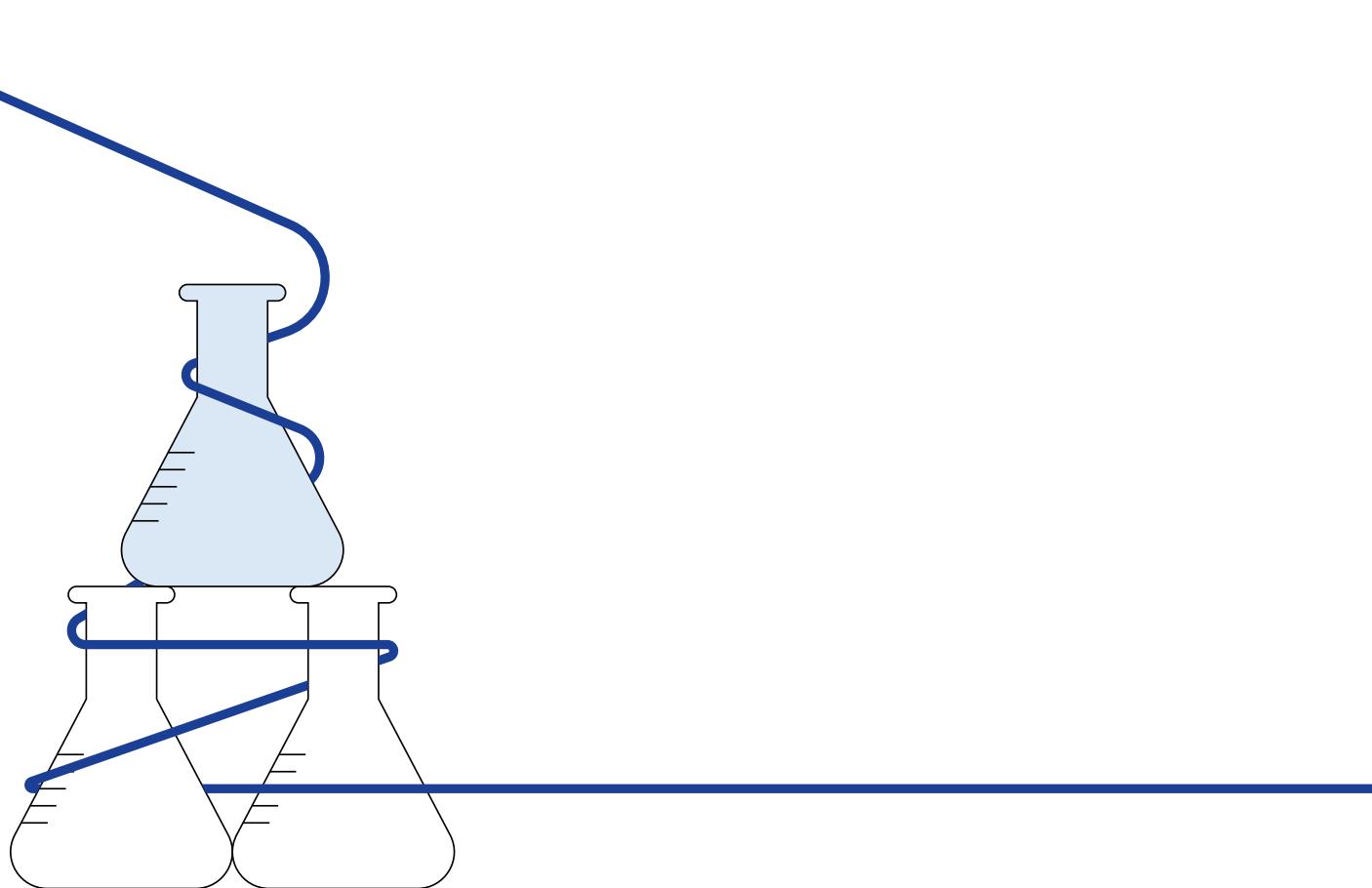
- Conduct continuous educational and media campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of various forms of gender-based violence, with special emphasis on recognizing psychological and economic violence; provide training for professionals in the protection system on identifying and proving psychological violence to ensure effective protection of victims (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Ministry of Interior, media).
- Expand the right to free legal aid to victims of all forms of gender-based violence, including in the online space, in accordance with the principle of equal protection and access to justice; improve the system of providing free legal aid by expanding the circle of authorized providers to include law schools and civil society organizations that meet the prescribed criteria, to ensure even availability of services throughout the territory (Ministry of Justice).
- Improve and expand the network of support services for victims of gender-based violence through the establishment of new shelters and SOS hotlines in all regions of Serbia, ensuring sufficient financial and professional resources; develop specialized services for victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, as well as for victims of forced and early marriages; improve cooperation of institutions with women's civil society organizations experienced in providing direct support to victims (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, local self-government units).
- Implement empowerment programs for women suffering violence through the development of economic support and counseling centers that ensure confidentiality, psychosocial assistance, and access to employment; conduct campaigns aimed at strengthening social solidarity and support for victims to reduce fear, shame, and the sense of isolation that prevent the reporting of violence (Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Employment Service).
- Conduct comprehensive educational and media campaigns aimed at changing social attitudes that normalize digital violence and shift blame to victims; raise public awareness of the consequences of digital violence and perpetrator accountability, and strengthen digital literacy programs for young people from the perspective of gender equality and safety in the online space (Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Ministry of Education, educational institutions, media, etc.).
- Establish specialized services and safe channels for reporting digital violence, as well as providing legal, psychological, and technical support to victims; develop campaigns encouraging women and girls to report digital violence and guaranteeing them confidentiality and protection from secondary victimization (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Ministry of Education, Republic Public Prosecutor's Office, local self-government units, educational institutions, media, etc.).

#### Health:

- Amend the Law on Treatment of Infertility via Biomedically Assisted Reproduction (BMAR) so that the right to BMAR is recognized equally for all adult women, under equal conditions, without distinction based on marital status (Ministry of Health).

- Improve the availability and quality of health services for women, especially for older women and those with lower incomes, by ensuring even territorial coverage, shorter waiting lists, and financially accessible therapy (Ministry of Health, Republic Fund for Health Insurance, health institutions).
- Improve the system of preventive programs, regular examinations, and screenings so that health risks are detected and reduced at an early stage, without setting limitations related to the patient's age (Ministry of Health, Republic Fund for Health Insurance, health institutions).
- Improve the availability and financial affordability of modern contraceptives provided at the expense of mandatory health insurance, to enable women a wider choice and minimal co-payment (Republic Fund for Health Insurance).
- Abolish or reduce VAT on products used for female hygiene (Ministry of Finance and RFZO).
- Ensure equal access to sexual and reproductive health services for all women and girls, with special support measures for adolescent girls, women with disabilities, Roma women, migrant women, refugees, and women from rural areas; implement education and information programs on sexual and reproductive health, including prevention, family planning, and access to gynecological examinations (Ministry of Health, Institute of Public Health of Serbia "Dr Milan Jovanović Batut", local self-government units).
- Establish effective mechanisms for prevention and action in cases of early pregnancies (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, health institutions, educational institutions, centres for social work, etc.).
- Continue work on improving the spatial and personnel capacities of gynaecological-obstetrics clinics; ensure respect for women's rights, adequate and humane treatment in accordance with regulations and modern professional standards in health institutions regarding childbirth, miscarriage, and abortion (Ministry of Health, gynaecological-obstetrics clinics).
- Improve health policies and standards to ensure postpartum psychological support for women, as well as training for health workers to recognise symptoms of postpartum depression and anxiety (Ministry of Health, gynaecological-obstetrics clinics).
- Ensure the accessibility of all health institutions and services to persons with disabilities, through the adaptation of space, equipment, and procedures; introduce mandatory training programs for health workers on access and communication with persons with disabilities, and continuously monitor the availability of health services, especially in the field of sexual and reproductive health of women with disabilities, including gynecological examinations, counseling, and family planning (Ministry of Health, health institutions).
- Increase awareness of the importance of mental health while improving psychosocial support services for all age groups of women and girls aimed at protecting mental health and overcoming traumatic experiences caused by gender-based violence and discrimination (Ministry of Health, health institutions, youth counseling centers, media).

- Improve standards of conduct for health institutions in in vitro fertilization (IVF) processes to ensure continuous support for couples after failed attempts covered by mandatory health insurance; introduce mandatory psychological counseling, monitoring, and support for patients, as well as education of health workers on communication based on empathy and respect; ensure that the health system recognizes and responds to the emotional and psychological needs of women in the infertility treatment process (Ministry of Health, RFZO, health institutions)





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