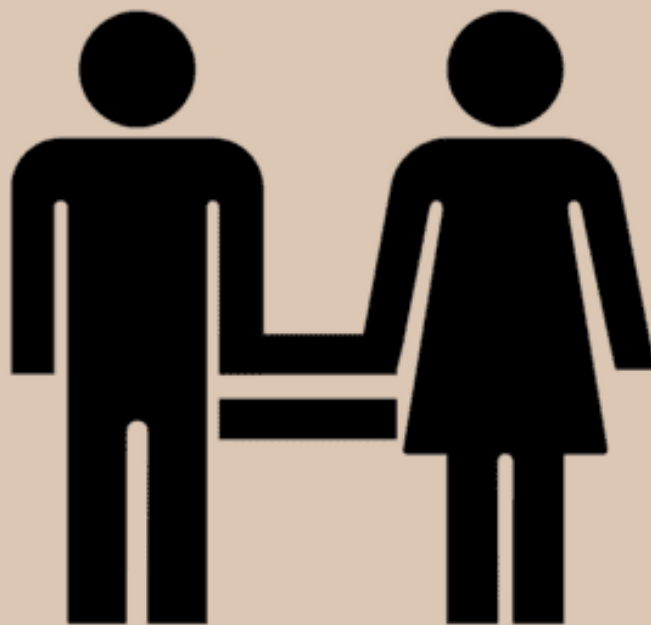


# MONITORING IZVJEŠTAJ

O IMPLEMENTACIJI AKCIONOG PLANA  
NACIONALNE STRATEGIJE RODNE RAVNOPRAVNOSTI 2021-2025  
ZA 2023. GODINU



WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER  
CENTAR ZA ŽENSKA PRAVA

Australian  
Aid 

**MONITORING REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF 2023 ACTION PLAN FOR NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2021-2025**

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Podgorica, May 2024

***DISCLAIMER:***

This publication was prepared with the financial support of the Australian Embassy to Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro. The NGO "Center for Women's Rights" shall assume the sole responsibility for the content of this publication, which does not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Embassy to Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**NSGE** National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025

**AP** Action Plan

**OP** Operational Objective

**APGR** Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality 2017-2021

**SCC** Secretariat of the Competitiveness Council

**UPR** Universal Periodic Review

**CEDAW** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

**FAI** Free Access to Information

## INTRODUCTION

This monitoring research aims to assess the degree of implementation of the activities outlined in the 2023 Action Plan of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025. We seek to determine whether the responsible entities have adhered to their commitments and to draw conclusions regarding actual changes in the status of target groups, primarily girls and women in Montenegro. **The subject of this monitoring report** includes the activities outlined in the Action Plan for 2023 and the results achieved within the reporting period. In addition to an overview of the implementation status, a review of all unimplemented activities, categorized by responsible institutions, is also provided.

The collected data and monitoring findings allow us to highlight the institutional areas and responsibilities that require further attention in the coming period to ensure a system that genuinely implements gender equality policies at all levels. Through this annual assessment of the 2023 Action Plan implementation, the Center for Women's Rights contributes to all efforts made by the Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. Despite working with insufficient capacities<sup>1</sup> for the horizontal monitoring of these policies under prescribed obligations, the Department has been diligent in its efforts. The purpose of this report is to present the state of this area as realistically as possible, to call the state to the task, to initiate public debate, and to advocate for substantive rather than declarative changes.

## METHODOLOGY

### Time frame of the study

The monitoring report encompasses all the Strategy activities the implementation of which is planned for 2023, including also the activities initiated in 2023 but extending into 2024. Since the monitoring was completed by the end of May 2024, the current status assessment includes data up to the end of the second quarter of the current year, a period when biennial activities are predominantly programmed. In line with the defined purpose and aim, we started our monitoring research at the beginning of 2024 by conducting a qualitative *desk analysis* of all available data related to the relevant subject. In addition to publicly available data, we submitted requests for free access to information (FAI) to all relevant institutions responsible for the activities outlined in Strategy so as to collect the required information from direct data sources. We also organized bilateral meetings with representatives of the

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<sup>1</sup> An assessment provided by the European Commission in the 2023 Montenegro, available at:

Ministry of Human and Minority Rights<sup>2</sup>, the Ministry of Culture and Media<sup>3</sup>, and the Committee for Gender Equality<sup>4</sup> to discuss the pace of implementation and future plans. Furthermore, information was obtained through our representative's membership in the Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025. The methodology for presenting information aligns with the official reporting *template* generated by the Government of Montenegro for the implementation of Strategy activities. This alignment allows for the comparison of information with official data (including those from previous periods), thereby contributing to a unified reporting methodology accepted at the level of the competent Ministry.

Final quantitative indicators, classified by each of the three operational objectives, provide precise answers to the research question (see below). Alongside the accompanying qualitative analyses, the Report presents also our conclusions and recommendations for improving the situation.

## CONTEXT

The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025 (NSGE) was adopted in 2021<sup>5</sup>, as the fourth<sup>6</sup> strategic document setting the framework for achieving gender equality in the country. The central issue identified is the low level of gender equality, and accordingly, the main strategic goal is ***to raise the level of gender equality in Montenegro by 2025***. Three primary causes of inequality have been identified: ineffective and inefficient institutional mechanisms for achieving gender equality, the presence of gender stereotypes and traditional role divisions between men and women in all segments of society, and the insufficient participation of women and individuals with diverse gender identities in areas that enable equal access to resources and benefits from their use. Based on this, the strategy has established three operational objectives:

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<sup>2</sup> A meeting with the Minister of Human and Minority Rights Fatmir Gjeka was held on 12/02/2024 on the premises of the Ministry, more information available at the following link:

<sup>3</sup> A meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Media was held on 14/02/2024.

<sup>4</sup> A meeting with the Committee for Gender Equality was organized on 28/02/2024, more information available at:

<sup>5</sup> Available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/41e3ee6a-757a-4684-9763-9fee5e933afd?version=1.0> accessed on: 15/05/2024.

<sup>6</sup> In order to implement the legal framework in the field of gender equality, Montenegro has so far adopted and implemented three action plans for achieving gender equality: the first covering the period from 2010 to 2012, the second from 2013 to 2017, and the third one for the period 2017 to 2021. Taken from the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, for more information, refer to the link: <https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/41e3ee6a-757a-4684-9763-9fee5e933afd?version=1.0>

- **Operational Objective 1: To improve the application of the existing normative framework for implementing gender equality policies and protection against gender and sex-based discrimination;**
- **Operational Objective 2: To enhance the areas of education, culture, and media to reduce stereotypes and prejudices against women and individuals with diverse gender identities;**
- **Operational Objective 3: To enhance the participation of women and individuals with diverse gender identities in sectors enabling access to resources and benefits derived from their utilization.**

To monitor the degree of achievement of these objectives, in addition to regular annual reporting on the implementation of action plans, the Strategy provides for the preparation of a mid-term evaluation immediately before the expiration of the first two-year Action Plan for 2021-2023. The evaluation results were published in the middle of last year. An *ex-post* evaluation is also expected to be finished by the end of the period covered by the Strategy, which will provide a broader picture and a comparative analysis of the implementation dynamics<sup>7</sup>. The primary two-year action plan included the organization of two round tables with representatives of all three branches of government, NGOs, employers' organizations, trade unions, and the media, where annual reports on the implementation of the Strategy were to be presented and discussed. However, this activity was not carried out as planned, but has been postponed to the next two-year interval (2023 and 2024).

It should be noted that the Center for Women's Rights, through its membership in the Working Group for the preparation of the 2023-2024 Action Plan of the NSGE 2021-2025, advocated for greater recognition of the contribution of women's non-governmental organizations in implementing the activities outlined in the Strategy. This also pertains to activities carried out by the women's civil sector to raise awareness and the importance of the current strategic framework within which gender equality policies should be implemented. Therefore, we present this monitoring report at a public event, which we will use to discuss the actual reach of the overarching strategic document that all institutions in the country have committed to at all levels of governance. As this document is directly linked to international gender equality instruments, we will also provide a brief overview of the implementation status of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), considering the current reporting processes, which occurred parallel to the monitoring or are closely related to the subject of the analysis (such as Australia's recommendation to Montenegro in the UPR process - REC: 133.8: ***To implement all measures from the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025 and action plans, which Montenegro has committed to***).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Including also the previous strategic document (PAPR).

<sup>8</sup> As a result of the advocacy campaign conducted by the Center for Women's Rights during the 43rd preparatory session of the Working Group for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), organized in April 2023 at the UN

The external mid-term evaluation of the implementation degree of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2025, with the Action Plan for 2021-2022<sup>9</sup>, indicates a low-level implementation, averaging less than 30% of the planned activities. Analyzing individual operational objectives, the highest number of planned activities were implemented under OC 1 (41.7%), followed by OC 3 (32.3%), and the least under OC 2 (14.3%). The same document highlights "significant external contextual changes" that were the primary cause of such a low level of implementation. These changes pertain to political challenges arising from the change of government at the national level following the parliamentary elections in August 2020, and the formation of a new government in December 2021, accompanied by personnel changes in the public administration. Security challenges, in the form of a *cyberattack* on the government website, disrupted electronic communication and blocked activities within and outside the government during the last two quarters of 2022. The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also negatively impacted the implementation of planned activities.

However, it is indicative that during the reporting period, no activities were implemented related to OC 2—*Improving policies in education, culture, and media to reduce stereotypes and prejudices against women and individuals of different gender identities*. The essence of inequality stems from dominant cultural patterns and socially ingrained gender roles, making the impact of education, culture, and media crucial in their change. This also applies to activities related to the introduction of gender-responsive programs in cultural institutions, the use of gender-sensitive language, the introduction of gender-responsive media content, and its monitoring from a gender perspective<sup>10</sup>. Institutional inertia in this regard becomes even more serious when considering the new set of binding recommendations from the CEDAW Committee concerning the education sector (see ANNEX for details). In the next reporting cycle on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Montenegro will have to report on what has been done to eliminate gender stereotypes from education, sensitize teaching staff, introduce education on women's sexual and reproductive rights, ensure conditions for menstrual hygiene in schools, encourage the inclusion of girls from minority groups in the education system, etc. As the process of drafting a comprehensive Education Reform Strategy for the

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headquarters in Geneva, Australia formulated their recommendation (REC: 133.8). Officially, the UN Human Rights Council analysed the state of human rights in Montenegro in May as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). This was the fourth UPR for Montenegro. The review is conducted for all UN member states once every four and a half years, starting from 2008. Eighty-seven UN member states participated in the UPR for Montenegro, thereby providing 247 recommendations. Montenegro accepted 226 and noted 21 recommendations. Most of these recommendations, i.e. 41 of them, are concerned with the areas of gender equality, gender-based violence, and hate speech against women. Further information available at: [https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Flyer\\_A4\\_MNE.pdf](https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Flyer_A4_MNE.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> More information available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/00303903-9045-4c6a-afed-b6e82ebc552b>, accessed on: 15/05/2024.

<sup>10</sup> Due to their importance, the 2022 Activity Implementation Report should have more clearly highlighted the passive approach of the institutions responsible for these activities.



period 2025-2035 officially began in March this year<sup>11</sup>, we have given special attention to strategic activities related to education. In the coming period, the Women's Rights Center will closely monitor reform processes to improve educational curricula, which, in their current form, do not ensure access to civic education based on an understanding of human rights and freedoms, which we consider a prerequisite for achieving a progressive, democratic, and egalitarian society.

## WHERE TO START?

In addition to the low implementation degree of the previous two action plans (see above), we are also referring to the most important assessments regarding the success of gender equality policies conducted by national, European, and international organizations, in order to provide a comparative basis for our monitoring research.

In its Report on the Success of Implementing National Gender Equality Policies in Montenegro, published in March 2023, the State Audit Institution<sup>12</sup> found that gender equality policies are not successfully implemented. Reports from the European Commission on Montenegro, for several years now, have repeatedly highlighted the limited impact of the legislative framework on gender equality. The latest report issued in 2023 indicates insufficient political will to treat this issue as a priority within the overall government accountability mechanisms<sup>13</sup>. Montenegro is recommended to adopt a comprehensive monitoring and data collection system to assess the level of implementation of laws, policies, and strategies on human rights.<sup>14</sup>

By the time when this report was being drafted (May 2024), the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee), relying on recommendations from the previous reporting cycle, issued preliminary concluding observations on the status of gender equality in Montenegro, along with accompanying recommendations<sup>15</sup>. Although the Committee made specific recommendations for each area covered by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the significant horizontal recommendations are those directly related to the three main strategic goals of the NSGE 2021-2025. These recommendations pertain to national mechanisms for advancing gender equality and gender-disaggregated data, gender

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<sup>11</sup> More information available at: <https://www.roditelji.me/blog/2024/03/26/pocinje-reforma-obrazovnog-sistema/>

<sup>12</sup> The Report is available at: <https://dri.co.me/doc/lzvještaj%20o%20reviziji%20uspjeha%20Usješnost%20sprovođenja%20politike%20rodnosti%20ravnopravnosti.pdf>, accessed on : 31/05/2024.

<sup>13</sup> Montenegro report 2023 – European Commission, page 39. Available at: [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/montenegro-report-2023_en)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Final remarks available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2710&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2710&Lang=en)

stereotypes, women's political participation, and access to resources. Accordingly, we highlight the following:

Montenegro should undertake the following measures:

- To increase human, technical, and financial resources of the Department for Gender Equality and ensure capacity building that will strengthen the gender expertise of its employees, to make them capacitated for effectively coordinating efforts to integrate the gender dimension across all government sectors (**Recommendation 16(a) CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**);
- To introduce mandatory integrated gender-responsive budgeting, improve technical capacities of the competent ministry for developing gender-responsive budgeting, and allocate adequate funds for enhancing the status of women (**Recommendation 16(b) CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**);
- To enhance the existing data collection system and coordination mechanisms, and expand their scope to include local and sectoral data disaggregated by gender, and use them to communicate and assess the impact of public policies, strategies, and programs aimed at achieving gender equality (**Recommendation 16(c) CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**);<sup>16</sup>
- To implement broad and comprehensive measures under the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025 and future national gender equality strategies, including awareness-raising and educational measures, to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society and foster a culture of gender equality, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including academia, communities and religious leaders, media, and youth (**Recommendation 22(a) CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**);
- To amend the provisions of the Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament to introduce a *zipper system*, which will impose an obligation for political parties to alternate male and female candidates on electoral lists, and implement these changes before the 2027 parliamentary elections, so as to achieve gender parity in political representation (**Recommendation 30(a) CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**);<sup>17</sup>
- To promote and build capacities for the systematic collection of statistical data in all areas relevant to the implementation of the Convention, disaggregated by gender, age, disability, geographic location, socio-economic background, and other relevant factors, to facilitate the design and implementation of gender-sensitive and responsive legislation, policies, programs, and budgets (**Recommendation 50. CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3**).

In addition, according to the CEDAW Committee report Montenegro is required, within the next two years, to report on the measures undertaken to strengthen the capacities of the

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<sup>16</sup> Montenegro must report on the implementation of this recommendation within the next two years.

<sup>17</sup> Montenegro must report on the implementation of this recommendation within the next two years.

Department for Gender Equality and introduce the *zipper* system on electoral lists under the new electoral legislation<sup>18</sup> (thereby ensuring that 50% of candidates are from among the less represented gender).

The inefficiency of gender equality policies is also exacerbated by non-functional institutional mechanisms for gender equality, led by the Gender Equality Council, whose mandate has not been renewed since 2020. Despite frequent changes in government and management staff, the functionality and mandate of the Council have not been prioritized by any of the previous administrations. The lack of trained officials/their commitment to the implementation of gender policies is another problem identified in the previously cited reports. Additionally, the so-called gender equality focal points, mostly employees in departments of finance, human resources or general affairs, are generally not involved in policy-making neither do they assess the gender dimension of policies and measures<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, the Law on Gender Equality<sup>20</sup>, last amended in 2015, is not sufficiently harmonized with international treaties, standards, and European directives<sup>21</sup>. There is no official assessment of the level of implementation and impact of this law on the status of women and girls in society, and the almost complete lack of enforcement of its penal provisions affects its marginal impact. Such a situation entails the need for a serious evaluation (which according to the official statements of the Ministry is not planned to be conducted before 2026<sup>22</sup>) of the progress made through existing legal solutions, and then subsequently through comprehensive amendments to the law, to strengthen its legal and substantive force and significance. This is also a recommendation made by the CEDAW Committee for Montenegro in its latest third reporting cycle<sup>23</sup>.

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF GENDER STATISTICS**

Besides the Statistical Office as the main source of data, the institutions producing official statistics, according to the Official Statistics Development Program 2024-2028, include also the Central Bank of Montenegro, the Ministry of Finance, the Institute of Public Health, and the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund. Comparatively, in the previous program (for the

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<sup>18</sup> Additionally, in the forthcoming two-year period, Montenegro should also report on measures taken to introduce femicide as a specific criminal offense in the Criminal Code and on the programs implemented to ensure the availability of free contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Law on Gender Equality (Official Gazette of Montenegro 046/07 ... 035/15 as of 07/07/2015), available at: [https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1612165858\\_zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.pdf](https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1612165858_zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Taken from the report of the State Audit Institution, available at: <https://dri.co.me/aktuelnost/objavljen-izvjestaj-o-reviziji- uspjeha- uspjesnost- sprovodenja- politike- rodne- ravnopravnosti- u- crnoj- gori>

<sup>22</sup> The information which the Montenegrin delegation communicated at the 88 session of UN CEDAW Committee.

<sup>23</sup> Recommendation 12 CEDAW/C/MNE/CO/3.

period 2019-2023), the sources of official statistics included also the Ministry of Science, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Tax Administration of Montenegro, the Customs Administration, and the Health Insurance Fund. For an institution to be included in the official statistics system, it must meet MONSTAT's criteria and submit an official request for admission by 10 June of the year preceding the year for which the five-year Official Statistics Program is adopted. According to the criteria generally approved, an institution has a public authority, a legal competence for producing specific statistics, and an organizational unit for data production. It remains unclear why the number of official statistics producers in the new program has been reduced compared to the previous period. This is particularly concerning in the context of the need to expand data production, while in reality, we are facing a worryingly small number of institutions responsible for producing official statistics, including gender-disaggregated data. Such reduction negatively impacts the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, which calls for the urgent capacity-building of state institutions to produce gender statistics. This is essential for evidence-based public policy planning and regular monitoring of their success. Considering the CEDAW Committee's observations and specific recommendations (15(d), 16(c), 34(b), 39(c), 49, 50), which highlight the lack of gender-disaggregated data across various sectors, this issue requires greater attention, understanding, and political will. Meeting the standards of developed statistical systems necessitates expanding the scope of data and the institutions producing statistics.

## STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE 2023 MONITORING RESEARCH

**Below is the list of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the 2023 Action Plan of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2025, in terms of their responsibilities in implementing activities and measures to promote gender equality.**

- ❖ **Ministry of Human and Minority Rights - Department for Gender Equality:** Coordinates activities aimed at establishing gender equality at all levels, including also the implementation of international standards and conventions in gender equality, preparing reports on Montenegro's compliance with international obligations, planning activities, and reporting on commitments, organizing public events and research on gender equality, and establishing cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations.<sup>24</sup>
- ❖ **Ministry of Finance - Directorate for State Budget:** in charge of gender-responsive budgeting and the Law on Budget and Fiscal Responsibility.
- ❖ **Ministry of Economic Development:** Responsible for promoting a gender-responsive investment environment and creating measures for women's entrepreneurship.

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<sup>24</sup> Law on Gender Equality, Article 22, available at: [https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1612165858\\_zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.pdf](https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1612165858_zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.pdf)

- ❖ **Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation:** Responsible for analyzing relevant curricula from a gender equality perspective and reforming the education system.
- ❖ **Ministry of Culture and Media:** Responsible for monitoring and analyzing media content from a gender equality perspective and implementing the First Montenegrin Media Strategy 2023-2027.
- ❖ **Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare - Directorate for Social Welfare and Child Protection:** Responsible for implementing labor and social welfare policies from a gender equality perspective and promoting these topics through training and campaigns.
- ❖ **Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Development of the North:** Responsible for monitoring climate change and its impact on the health of women, men, and individuals of different gender identities.
- ❖ **Human Resources Administration - Sector for Professional Development and Training of State and Local Officials and Employees:** Responsible for conducting training on gender equality and protection against gender-based discrimination.
- ❖ **Bureau for Education Services:** Responsible for organizing training for educators on gender equality topics.
- ❖ Other stakeholders in the implementation of gender equality policies: **women's non-governmental organizations.** Four representatives from the NGO sector participate in the Working Group to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality. In addition to their longstanding work on protecting women's human rights at the national level Women's NGOs also submit shadow reports to international bodies on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

**RESEARCH QUESTION: HAS THERE BEEN ANY IMPROVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN MONTENEGRO COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS EVALUATION PERIOD?**

# REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY 2021-2025 WITH THE ACTION PLAN FOR 2023

## Progress Overview by Operational Goals

### **Operational Objective 1 (OP 1): Enhance the Implementation of the Existing Regulatory Framework on Gender Equality Policies and Protection Against Gender and Sex-Based Discrimination**

#### **Implemented activities:**

1. The Secretariat of the Council for Competitiveness organized a workshop on gender-responsive budgeting for directors of directorates in all the ministries, as well as for budget analysts<sup>25</sup>.
2. The Ministry of Finance, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Council for Competitiveness and the OSCE mission, organized a round table for budget users and the interested public, where documents related to gender-responsive budgeting prepared during AP 2021-2022 were presented:
  - Brochure "Gender-Responsive Budgeting"
  - Proposals for amendments to the Law on Budget and Fiscal Responsibility - Gender Budget Statement<sup>26</sup>.
3. The Ministry of Economic Development presented the following analyses:
  - Gender-Responsive Investment Environment in Montenegro for 2022
  - Gender Analysis of the Program for Improving Economic Competitiveness for 2022<sup>27</sup>.
4. The Ministry of Finance, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Council for Competitiveness, organized a training of trainers from institutions on gender-responsive budgeting, following the methodologies of the Secretariat of the Council for Competitiveness and the OSCE<sup>28</sup>.
5. The applicable Rulebook on the content and manner of keeping separate records on cases of reported discrimination was analyzed, and a common methodology for collecting, processing, and presenting data related to discrimination was established.
6. At least **three workshops** were organized for employees of various institutions (state and local officials), representatives of the Parliament of Montenegro, and the State Audit Institution on key concepts of gender equality, gender mainstreaming, gender-

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<sup>25</sup> More information on the workshop available at: <https://www.osce.org/me/mission-to-montenegro/555918>

<sup>26</sup> Available at: <https://www.osce.org/me/mission-to-montenegro/538116>

<sup>27</sup> Response of the Ministry of Economic Development to the request for free access to information submitted by the Women's Rights Centre

<sup>28</sup> Available at: <https://scc.directory/web/index.php/scc-linkedin>

responsive budgeting, gender data analysis, and coordination of institutions in the anti-discrimination system.

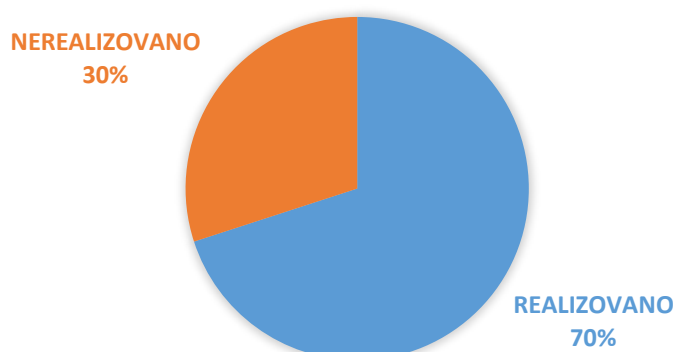
7. **Two public events** were organized with representatives from all three branches of government, NGOs, employers' organizations, trade unions, and the media to discuss the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy and present research, publications, programs, recommendations, etc., resulting from its implementation. Each public event concluded with a summary of conclusions and recommendations.

### **Unimplemented activities:**

1. Drafting a **Guide for Institutions** on the Collection, Processing, and Presentation of Data Using a Unified Methodology.
2. Organization of at least **two workshops** for senior management in institutions on key concepts of gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting, RIA from a gender perspective, gender mainstreaming, data collection, and processing on discrimination in institutions, and coordination of institutions.
3. **Collection and publication on the website** of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of all publications, research, brochures, programs, reports, regulations, guides, recommendations, etc., arising from the implementation of AP 2021-2022 and AP 2023-2025, as well as publications, brochures, research, and recommendations stemming from NGO programs and projects financed based on Public Calls for NGOs published by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights.

*State of play:* Out of 10 activities aimed at **enhancing the implementation of the existing regulatory framework on gender equality policies and protection against gender and sex-based discrimination (OP1)**, 7 activities (70%) were realized, whereas 3 (30%) remained uncompleted. The most significant progress was achieved in the area of gender-responsive budgeting. On the other hand, over the years insufficient progress has been achieved in the area of protection against gender-based discrimination, gender-disaggregated data, and gender statistics, as well as the general mainstreaming of public policies.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS ACHIEVED UNDER OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 1: TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK ON GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PROTECTION AGAINST GENDER AND SEX-BASED DISCRIMINATION



Graph 1: Overview of the activities implemented under OP 1

## Operational Goal 2 (OP 2): Improve Policies in Education, Culture, and Media to Reduce Stereotypes and Prejudices Against Women and Individuals with Different Gender Identities

### Implemented activities:

1. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation analyzed the relevant curricula from the gender equality perspective.<sup>29</sup>
2. The Bureau for Education Services organized workshops for primary and secondary school students on media literacy, recognizing gender stereotypes, and protection from online violence (in each of the three regions, three workshops were organized in schools).<sup>30</sup>
3. The Ministry of Culture and Media modified the criteria for allocating funds from the Media Pluralism and Diversity Fund under Measure 2.5.<sup>31</sup>
4. Two training sessions on gender equality were organized for preschool educators.
5. Two training sessions on gender equality were organized for teachers in vocational education.
6. A **media campaign** and a social media campaign against gender-based online violence were organized.

<sup>29</sup> Information on the activities implemented so far: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/prezentacija-programa-rodna-ravnopravnost-rodno-senzitivni-jezik-sici-inspektorat-eget-see>

<sup>30</sup> A response from the Bureau for Educational Services Zavoda za školstvo na SPI zahtjev Centra za ženska prava

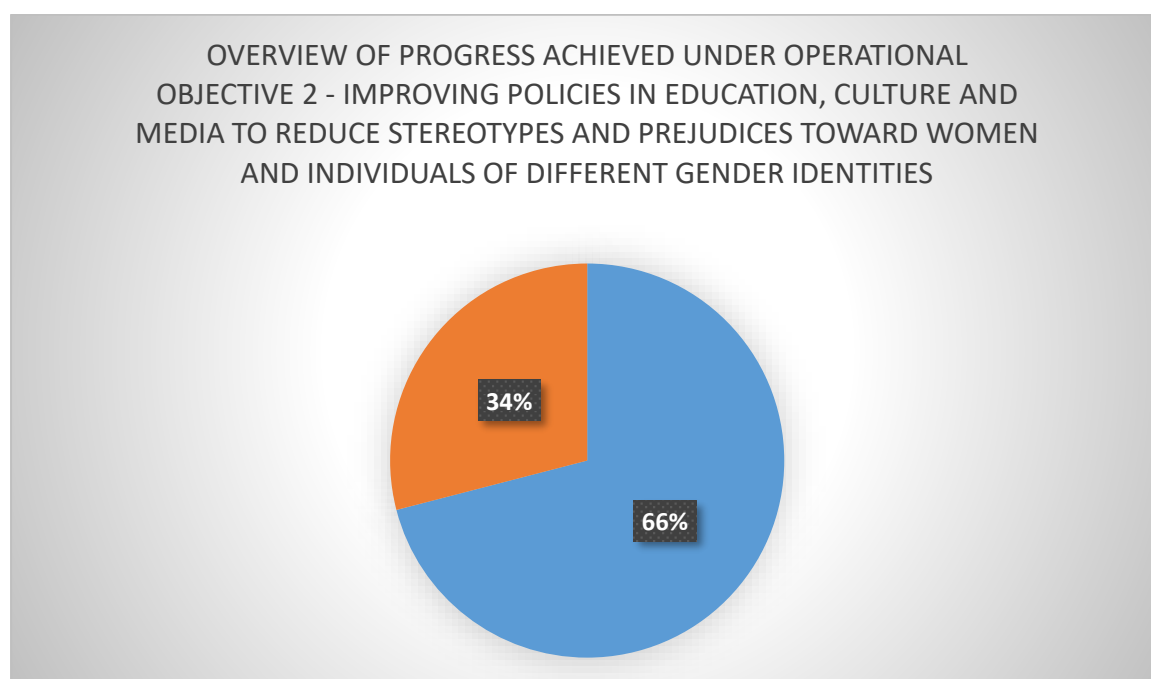
<sup>31</sup> A conclusion reached at the meeting between the Ministry of Culture and Media and the centre for Women's Rights



### Unimplemented activities:

1. Organization of **interactive school events** in primary and secondary schools on gender equality and sex- and gender-based discrimination.
2. Initiating a **memorandum of cooperation** with the University of Montenegro to incorporate a gender dimension into every subject, in a manner and to the extent appropriate for the area and content of study, within study programs for future educators and teachers.
3. Organization of **three counseling sessions** for school directors and representatives of pedagogical and psychological services in primary and secondary schools (one counseling session in each of the three regions).

*State of play:* Out of nine activities initially planned under OP2, six (66%) were carried out, while three activities (34%) were not completed. According to these data, some progress has been recorded in education and media over the past year. The gender dimension has not been incorporated into subjects that are part of study programs for future educators, based on the memorandum that was to be signed with the University of Montenegro. School directors, alongside representatives of pedagogical and psychological services in primary and secondary schools, have yet to undergo training on gender equality.



Graph 2: Overview of the activities implemented under OP 2

**Operational Objective 3 (OP 3): To increase participation of women and individuals of different gender identities in the areas ensuring access to natural and social resources, as well as benefits achieved through resource utilization.**

**Activities implemented:**

1. The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, in collaboration with UNDP, organized a roundtable on women's participation in politics.<sup>32</sup>
2. The Ministry of Economic Development organized two consultations on the importance of women's participation in entrepreneurship and economic decision-making, including conclusions and recommendations.<sup>33</sup>
3. The Ministry of Economic Development conducted a campaign on the importance of women's participation in entrepreneurship to increase the percentage of women business owners, and owners of land and real estate.<sup>34</sup>
4. The Ministry of Economic Development enhanced existing support lines for women's entrepreneurship.<sup>35</sup>
5. The Ministry of Economic Development produced a report on state aid funds allocated by the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism, disaggregated by gender, for 2023 and 2024.<sup>36</sup>
6. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare organized an informational campaign through media and social networks to raise awareness about economic violence among various target groups.<sup>37</sup>

**Unimplemented activities:**

1. To organize three interactive workshops for high school students on the role of women in science, one in each of the three regions of Montenegro.
2. In collaboration with the Statistical Office, to develop a methodology for monitoring the impact of climate change on the health of women, men, and individuals of different gender identities.
3. According to the methodology developed under Activity 3.8.1, to conduct a study on the impact of climate change on the health of women, men, and individuals of different gender identities.

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<sup>32</sup> More information on the roundtable: <https://www.skupstina.me/me/clanci/razgovori-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti-politicki-put-zena-od-sticanja-prava-glasa>

<sup>33</sup> A response of the Ministry of Economic Development to the request for free access to information submitted by the Women's Rights Centre

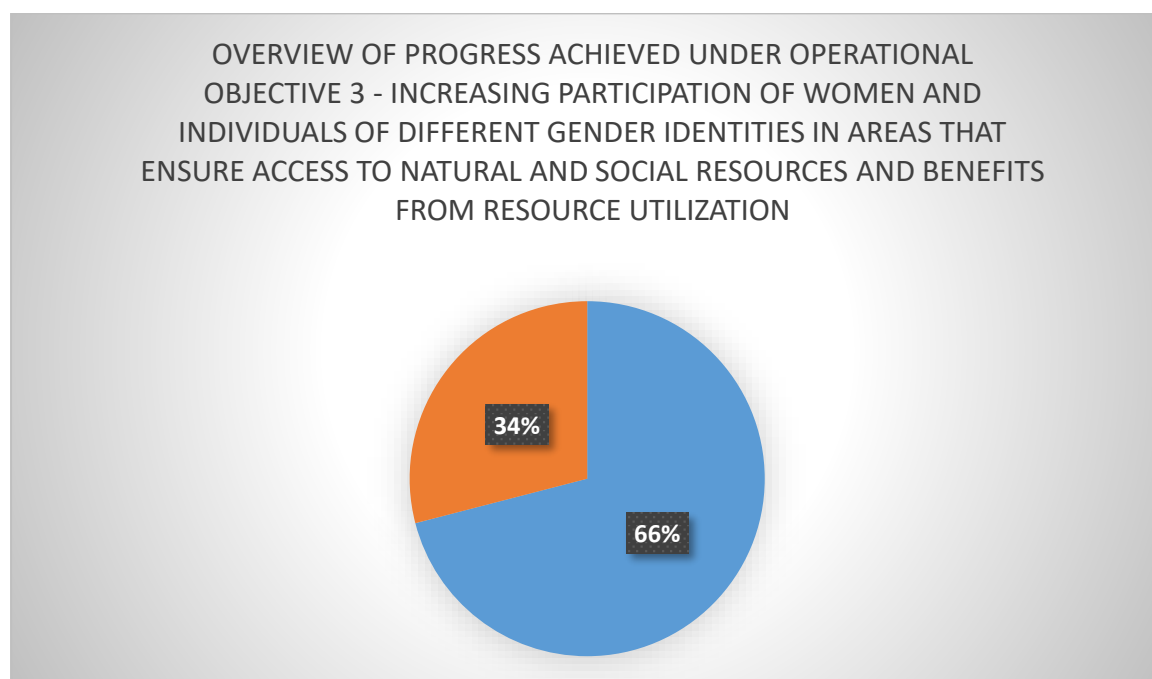
<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Response of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to the request for free access to information submitted by the Women's Rights Centre

**State of play:** Out of nine activities aimed at increasing the participation of women and individuals of different gender identities in areas ensuring access to natural and social resources, six (66%) were implemented, whereas three activities (34%) were not completed. Significant progress was made in the area of women’s participation in entrepreneurship. Partial progress was achieved in women's participation in political life and raising awareness of economic violence. On the other hand, no progress has been made in increasing the percentage of women enrolling in STEM education or in collecting data on the effects climate change has on the health of women and men.



*Graph 3: Overview of the activities implemented under OP 3*

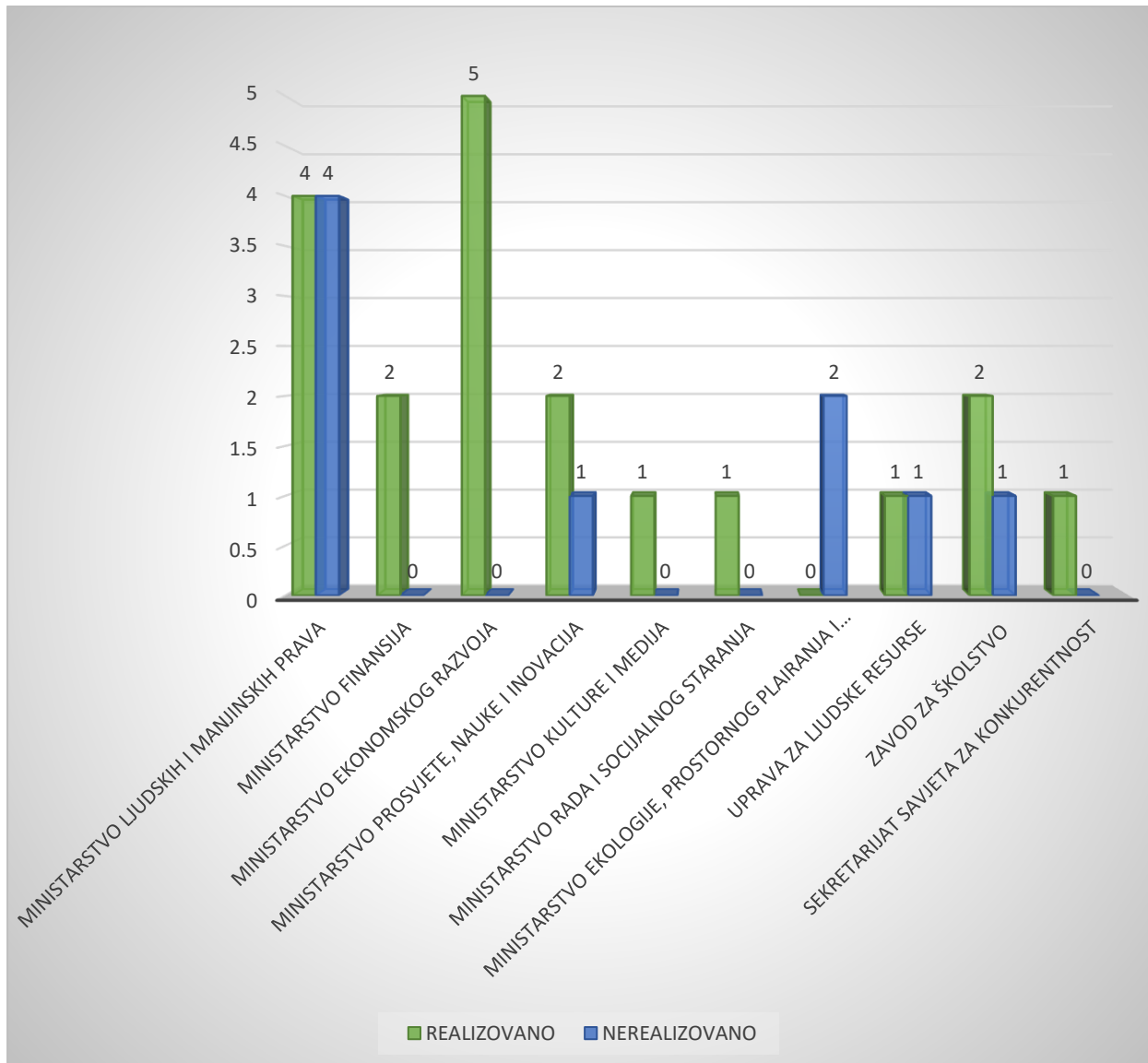
When compared to the results of the previous evaluation<sup>38</sup> of the NSGE Action Plan 2021-2025 for the year 2022, where the majority of the activities implemented were related to OP 1 (41.7%), followed by the activities under OP 3 (32.3%), and the smallest number of activities implemented under OP 2 (14.3%), the report for 2023 shows more activities being implemented across all three operational goals. Specifically, the implementation rates are as follows: 70% for OP 1, and 66% for both OP 2 and OP 3. Although these figures are encouraging, they still meet only minimum expectations, especially bearing in mind that most of the unimplemented activities from the previous Action Plan for 2021-2022 were carried over and redirected to the new action period covering 2023 and 2024.

<sup>38</sup> The report available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/9e30cb28-5d4d-4079-9225-6908050c8627> , accessed on: 20/05/2024.

## Implementation overview, including a view of all the institutions in charge

- **The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights has implemented 4 out of 8 activities initially planned, leaving 4 activities unimplemented.** According to the European Commission's 2023 Report on Montenegro and the latest recommendations from the CEDAW Committee, the Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry has been repeatedly criticized for its extremely limited capacity. The shortage of adequately trained expert staff has led to ineffective measures and poor coordination between institutions, both of which are crucial for successful policy-making and implementation. This issue must be given greater political attention in the coming period.
- **The Human Resources Administration has implemented 1 out of 2 activities initially planned.** There was no response to the request for free access to information submitted by the Women's Rights Center, and on the Human Resources Administration's website, we could not find information on the implementation of activities either. The information we obtained was forwarded to us by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights.
- **The Competitiveness Council Secretariat has implemented 1 activity** planned for the previous year, achieving a 100% success rate.
- **The Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with its partners, has implemented each of the 2 activities originally planned,** also achieving a 100% success rate.
- **The Ministry of Economic Development has implemented all of the 5 activities initially planned, achieving a 100% success rate as well.**
- **The Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation has implemented 2 out of 3 activities initially planned.**
- **Similarly, the Bureau for Education Services has implemented 2 out of 3 activities planned for the reporting year.**
- **The Ministry of Culture and Media has implemented 1 activity,** which was also the only activity planned for the reporting year.
- **The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has implemented 1 activity,** which was also the only one planned for the reporting year.
- **The Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism has not implemented either of the 2 activities originally planned for the previous year.** The Ministry did not respond to our request for free access to information, and we could not find on their website any information on the implementation rate.

Graph 4: Overview of the implemented activities disaggregated by responsible institutions



## CONCLUSION:

A thematic review of all the activities implemented in 2023 reveals significant efforts in gender-responsive budgeting, mainly through training organized by the Ministry of Economic Development in collaboration with the Competitiveness Council. During the reporting period, the Department for Gender Equality increased its activities, particularly by contributing to the drafting of the Law on Protection of Equality and Prohibition of Discrimination, and the Law on Legal Recognition of Gender Identity based on self-determination. They also coordinated the UPR and CEDAW reporting processes. Adoption of these laws will undoubtedly strengthen the normative framework for implementing anti-discrimination policies. However, there is still a need for future amendments to the overarching Gender Equality Law. Experience shows that the full implementation of these laws requires clear political will, which is essential for enhancing the capacities and responsibilities of relevant institutions.

Activities related to integrating gender perspectives into policies and developing methodologies for collecting comparable gender-disaggregated data showed no visible progress in 2023. This is not surprising given that the number of official data sources was halved during the programming period of the new official statistics development strategy (as discussed in the introductory part of this report). Although the lack of expertise among public administration staff on gender equality topics is recognized in all major national and international documents, there was insufficient effort to address this issue last year. Consequently, there was a lack of training for high-level management (directors of directorates and state secretaries) on gender equality topics. It is clear that without sensitivity, training, and political will, significant results in improving equality in society cannot be achieved.

Improving the education system and the capacity of teaching staff through customized training is of particular importance in the ongoing education reform in Montenegro. Therefore, the Institute for Education and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation need to expedite the implementation of activities outlined in the Strategy. Additionally, even after four years, we lack data on the impact of climate change on women's health, and this year we will also not have baseline gender statistics necessary for developing further climate and green policies.

**When it comes to the activities from the Action Plan (AP), 65% of the activities were implemented in 2023 across all three operational goals, which is twice as many compared to the previous Action Plan for the period 2021-2022. However, the initial positive impression is undermined by the fact that unimplemented activities have been carried over to new action plans for years. This was shown by the external mid-term evaluation published mid-last year, just before the end of the first two-year Action Plan for 2021-2023, which had as many as 70% unimplemented activities.**

In addition, Montenegro received a significant number of repeated recommendations within the third cycle of UPR and CEDAW reporting (some dating back to 2011), which supports the assessments we presented at the beginning, indicating insufficient political commitment and the weak impact of gender equality policies on the lives of our citizens. This also answers our initial research question on whether there has been any improvement in implementing gender equality policies in Montenegro.

The Government of Montenegro must intensify its efforts to meet all of its goals by 2025 and, based on the achieved results, establish a new strategic framework that will incorporate the recommendations received from the aforementioned international bodies. And all of this under the assumption that institutions have visibly enhanced their capacities for full implementation of these recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

These consolidated recommendations are entirely based on unimplemented activities from the 2023 Action Plan, so they should be prioritized to be implemented by the end of the current year.

### For the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights:

1. To continue working on developing the Guidelines intended for institutions on the collection, processing, and presentation of data according to a unified methodology.
2. **To collect and publish on the website** of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights all publications, research, brochures, programs, reports, regulations, guidelines, recommendations, etc., resulting from the implementation of AP 2021-2022 and AP 2023-2025, as well as publications, brochures, research, and recommendations resulting from programs and projects of NGOs funded through Public Calls for NGOs launched by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights – as a consolidated database.
3. To initiate **the signing of a memorandum** of cooperation with the University of Montenegro to incorporate a gender dimension into every subject, in a manner and to the extent appropriate to the field and content of study, in study programs where future educators and teachers are being trained.
4. To organize special **interactive school events** in primary/secondary schools on the topic of gender equality and discrimination based on sex and gender, in all three regions of Montenegro.

**For the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovations:**

1. To organize three interactive workshops for high school students on the role of women in science, one in each of the three regions of Montenegro.

**For the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning, and Urbanism:**

1. In collaboration with the Statistical Office, to develop a methodology for monitoring the impact of climate change on the health of women, men, and individuals of different gender identities.
2. According to the methodology developed under Activity 3.8.1, to conduct a study on the impact of climate change on the health of women, men, and individuals of different gender identities.

**For the Bureau for Education Services:**

1. To organize **three counseling sessions** for school directors and representatives of pedagogical and psychological services in primary and secondary schools (one counseling session in each of the three regions).

**For the Human Resources Administration:**

1. Organize at least **two workshops** for senior management in institutions on key concepts of gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting, RIA from a gender perspective, gender mainstreaming in policies, collecting and processing data on discrimination in institutions, and institutional coordination.