



PRESS RELEASE

Women in Politics Strategize to Strengthen Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-making in Kosovo

Today, 13 June 2018, at Hotel Emerald in Pristina, Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova, Head of the EU Office in Kosovo and EU Special Representative (EUSR), the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and the Kosovo Lobby for Gender Equality jointly organised a meeting with women politicians, members of parliament, municipal assemblies and gender equality officers. The meeting created a space for strategizing how to strengthen the impact of women in politics and decision-making in Kosovo.

Women remain underrepresented in politics at both municipal and national levels in Kosovo. Several efforts have been undertaken to address this. Yet, women remain underrepresented after last year's municipal and national elections.

In welcoming participants, Ambassador Nataliya Apostolova emphasized the important role of women. Women in politics, in particular, can advance the position of women and contribute to achieving gender equality. "A key aspect is solidarity," Ambassador Apostolova said. "Sometimes societies teach us, as women, to compete with each other, to under-cut each other, to bring each other down. We have to stop this vicious circle. It is when we unite and come together that we are the strongest and bring about the greatest changes."

Igballe Rogova, KWN Executive Director, spoke about the history of women's joint organizing, recalling the significant changes that have occurred in Kosovo when women in politics and civil society have united. Recognizing this, the Kosovo Lobby for Gender Equality emphasized in their last meeting the need for women politicians at local and central levels to unite forces. "When we saw the need to reunite at the local level, we began collecting assemblies across various municipalities because we saw that together we can push things forward," Rogova said. "It's time to join together."

Concretely, participants divided into working groups to strategize and discuss key factors undermining women's participation in politics. They identified steps to be taken between now and the next elections, towards increasing women's involvement in politics. Working group topics included: improving the legal framework; working with political party leaders; building constituencies and mobilizing women voters; financing women candidates' campaigns; recruiting and empowering more women candidates to run; addressing issues preventing women's participation in politics; and improving media coverage of women candidates and politicians.

Participants agreed on the need to establish a joint alliance of women in politics that would help promote their shared aims and successes. They also discussed creating a Mentoring Program for women politicians at local and central levels. Women politicians provided information regarding their expectations for such a program and ideas on how women can best support each other. *The next meeting will be held on June 22 in Pristina.*

This event was supported by the European Union Special Representative Office in Kosovo.