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PRESS RELEASE

KWN Presents in Brussels New Report on Gender-based Discrimination, Labour in Balkans

Brussels 15 -16 October 2019

Today a representative of the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) presented a new report on [***Gender-based Discrimination and Labour in the Western Balkans***](#) in Brussels during the "10th Regional Coordination Meeting of the EU Candidate Countries and Potential Countries" organized by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

The research suggests that labour-related gender-based discrimination is a key issue hindering women's employment, as well as undermining their labour rights in the Western Balkans (WB).

"Are you married? Do you have children? Do you plan to have children? Unfortunately these are common job interview questions in the Western Balkans", said Nicole Farnsworth, KWN Program Director and Lead Researcher, who presented the report. More than 60% of women research respondents had been asked such questions.

While differing by country, up to one-third of respondents had faced violations of maternity leave rights. Meanwhile, in most countries more than a third of respondents had experienced sexual harassment at work, primarily by male supervisors.

The [research report](#) contains several recommendations for WB institutions as well as the European Union (EU), including the adoption and implementation of legal reforms on gender-based discrimination, improved monitoring, awareness-raising of people regarding their rights and the importance of continued support to women right's organisations.

The report was researched and written by a coalition of women's rights organisations from the Western Balkans, including the [Kosovo Women's Network](#), [Reactor – Research in Action](#) from North Macedonia, [Gender Alliance for Development Centre](#) from Albania, [Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Banja Luka](#) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, [Women's Rights Centre](#) from Montenegro, and the [Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation](#) from Sweden through its office in Serbia.

Supported by the EU and the Swedish International Development Agency, the study is part of a broader regional initiative aimed at addressing gender-based discrimination and improving women's labour rights. The report will inform the initiatives of this coalition and their partners.

The [regional report](#) was first [launched](#) two weeks ago at the EU in Brussels.

Other topics discussed at today's event in Brussels included the shrinking space for gender equality and women's rights organisations; current gender equality priorities in the EU; and development of national Gender Equality Indices in the WB.





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Other speakers at the event included: **Mira Banerjee**, Head of Knowledge Management and Communication Unit, EIGE; **Liselotte Isaksson**, Head of Sector, Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes - Civil Society and Social Inclusion, Directorate General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations; **Olga Martin Gonzalez**, Gender Equality Coordinator, Centre of Thematic Expertise Rule of Law/Fundamental Rights, Democracy, Directorate; **Elisa Mincheva**, International Relations Officer, Directorate General for Justice, Consumer Rights and Gender Equality; **Dragana Dardic**, Executive Director, Helsinki Citizens Assembly; **Yolanda Iriarte**, Regional Programme Manager/Programme Specialist, Ending Violence against Women, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office; **Marry Collins**, Senior Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, European Women's Lobby.

Event participants included representatives of gender equality mechanisms like the Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo, statistical agencies and EU gender focal points from the WB.

The meeting followed on the official launching of the EU Gender Equality Index yesterday.