



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

KWN Expresses Dissatisfaction with the Western Balkans Summit for not Addressing the Gender Equality

Press Release

May 19, 2020

Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), supported by Western Balkans WCSOs in the framework of the Regional Coalition for Gender Mainstreaming the EU Accession Process, addressed EU leaders yesterday with a letter expressing its deep dissatisfaction with the failure of the Western Balkans Summit to address crucial gender inequalities in the region.

Together with this coalition, KWN stressed its concern that the Zagreb Declaration, held early this month, concluded with only one vague reference to the gender equality. Its focus on the coronavirus crisis did not initiate any discussion regarding the worrying increase in gender-based violence in the WB or the preparedness of WB states to address this. It also failed to discuss a gender perspective in the reforms that WB partners should be making in the EU Accession process, nor did it assess how this pandemic impacts men and women differently. The coalition further claimed that the lack of content-relevant discussion or conclusions related to gender equality gave the impression that EU is not giving adequate consideration to addressing the gender equality. Rather, they are treating it as nothing more than part of an accomplished exercise.

The coalition has demanded that gender equality, as a fundamental value of the EU, *must be addressed* within discussions at such summits, as it contributes to the EU commitments of furthering gender equality. The letter has further stressed that the EU address gender equity in the areas of health, education and social policy, as well as encourage gender responsive budgeting in the distribution of EU funds during the COVID-19 crisis.

KWN and members of the coalition have concluded that the WB Summit missed the incorporation of a gender perspective and advancement of gender equality in the region. They concluded their letter with a number of **recommendations** for the EU representatives to be considered in future events: **EU representatives** following through on their **commitments to advance gender equality**; **WB governments** and **leaders are** encouraged to further gender equality as a fundamental value of the EU, when taking efforts towards EU Accession and in addressing the COVID-19 crisis by conducting ex-ante gender impact analysis; to consult gender equality mechanisms; to use gender responsive budgeting when distributing EU funds dedicated for the social and economic recovery of vulnerable groups; to assess the impact of measures fighting COVID-19 on gender equality;

and to share best practices in fighting the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic from a gender perspective.



This letter was signed by:

[Albanian Women's Empowerment Network](#) (Albania) (10 members)
[Association of Women Sandglass](#) (Serbia)
[Foundation "United Women" Banja Luka](#) (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
[Kosovo Women's Network](#) (Kosovo) (161 members)
[Reactor – Research in Action](#) (North Macedonia)
[Rights for All](#) (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
[Voice Against Violence Network \(North Macedonia\) \(18 members\)](#)
[Women's Rights Centre](#) (Montenegro)

Please click [HERE](#) to read the full letter.

