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Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences

Master Thesis

Comparative analyses of gender equality machineries in the Republic of Albania and in North Macedonia and their impact on gender mainstreaming in government policies and budgets.

Mentor:
Prof.Dr. Memet Memeti

Candidate:
Ermira Lubani ID 129756

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Gender equality is not a woman's issue, it is a human issue. It affects us all, regardless of gender...

1. INTRODUCTION

The Fourth World Women Conference held in Beijing (1995) provided, for the first time in the history, the formal impetus in the creation of worldwide National Women's Machineries within the larger framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Specifically, Strategic Objective H, under chapter IV, outlined the need to ensure gender equality mainstreaming and empowerment of women in governmental institutions, policies and programs through national institutional mechanisms, such as National Women's Machineries,¹. Since this time, the number, aims and missions of National Women's Machineries has grown exponentially, including the Balkans region².

More than three decades of international best practices and a rich body of evidence demonstrate gender machineries to be a crucial tool for engendering the state and for promoting feminist policymaking³.

As by definition, gender machineries are referred as bodies mandated to promote gender equality and support mainstreaming of gender equality into general policies in all areas of policymaking⁴. The main role of such machineries is to improve the situation of women through several actions that aim to increase the collaboration with different ministries, and government agencies and civil society⁵.

Usually, they consist of central government bodies complemented with inter-ministerial coordinating gender mainstreaming structures and contact persons or focal points responsible for gender mainstreaming in line ministries.⁶

¹ https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/E.ESCWA_.ECW_.2019.4.pdf.

² https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/E.ESCWA_.ECW_.2019.4.pdf.

³ Joni Lovenduski, *Feminizing Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1259>.

⁵ https://belarus.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Pramila_Patten_National_machineries_for_gender_equality_a_CEDAW_perspective-en.pdf

⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1259>

Examining these structures in many countries around the world shows that in practice the machineries take a wide variety of forms, from formal ministries to temporary councils and committees.

In some cases, they have been established as result of specific law, such as the law of Equal Opportunities or several specific initiatives taken by the political party who is in power and cares for matters of gender equality.

Practitioners in the field of gender equality suggest that gender machineries are effective only if placed in the highest possible government centralised structures and are followed by a dedicated budget with strong leadership.

In order for the machineries to resist government changes, they have to be flexible and adaptable in nature so to fulfil their mission on achieving Gender Equality. In some countries, a range of single-issue agencies--for labour, health, and education matters can be more effective than a large Ministry expected to cover all issues⁷.

While several studies exist regarding the status of gender machineries in Balkans, including Albania and Northern Macedonia, up to now, no comparative analysis has been made between the two countries, which could provide evidence of either successes or failures on gender mainstreaming in government policies, budgets, and their impact on gender equality. Therefore, the current study focuses on the comparative analyses of gender equality machineries in the Republic of Albania and in North Macedonia and their impact on gender mainstreaming in government policies and budgets and the possible effects on gender equality.

⁷ "McBride, Dorothy; Mazur, Amy. 2012. Gender Machineries Worldwide. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/9118> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

1.2 Research field

While studies exist regarding the status of gender machinery in both countries of Albania and North Macedonia each co there is no comparative analysis between them which will give the evidence of either successes or failures on mainstreaming gender in government policies and budgets and their impact on gender equality. Therefore, this study aims at exploring international and national legal frameworks, gender reports, policies, government structures and institutional setup of gender equalities in both countries and make comparison between them and suggest what can be best approaches to better impact gender equality.

1.3 Aims of the research

The current thesis aims at exploring international and national legal frameworks, policies, government structures and institutional setup of gender machineries in both countries of Albania and North Macedonia; make comparison between them; and further suggest what other approaches can be implemented to better impact gender equality in both countries.

1.4 Research questions of the present thesis

In order to achieve the aim of the current study, the thesis tries to answer the following central research question:

- How is the situation of gender machineries in Albania and North Macedonia, in terms of government gender mainstreaming policies, budgets and country equality gender profiles?

The following sub-questions have been formulated to help answering the main research question:

RQ1. What are the international and national legal framework that mandate the existence of gender machineries in each country?

RQ2. What are the main factors that influence the work of gender machineries in each country?

RQ3. How is the situation of gender mainstreaming in both countries?

RQ4. What are the key results and lessons learned for possible future replication?

1.5 Research methodology

The study uses the methodology of desk research to assess common and existing information, knowledge and analyses conducted up to now by international and national organizational bodies active in the field of gender equality in western Balkans and specifically in Albania and North Macedonia. The desk research has served as a tool in assessing the quality of information provided by current studies and identify gap analyses and missing pieces when it comes to the assessment of both gender machineries and the comparison between them in both countries of Albania and North Macedonia.

Part of the desk research, although not subject of this study, was examining the best models globally on the well-structured and well-functioning gender machineries in order to be able to frame the recommendations of the theses including EU standards⁸.

More than 200 documents that have been identified and researched for the purpose of this theses have been included in the bibliography.

The main information provided in the desk review is gathered from reliable sources in accordance with the nature of the research question.

In particular, the research approach and the research method are presented discussing their advantages and disadvantages.

While doing the research two type of sources were used: internal and external.

⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

Summaries the two sources of secondary data used:

Internal sources	External sources
Definition: Internal to the gender machineries and organization inside the governments of Albania and North Macedonia including different government reports, assessment and analyses	Definition: External studies, researched conducted outside of governments and gender machineries including theoretical frameworks o related to the these.
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The latest CEDAW reports produced by Albania and North Macedonia ⁹¹⁰ • National review for implementation of the Beijing Platform for action, Beijing +25, North Macedonia¹¹ • National review for implementation of the Beijing Platform for action, Beijing +25, Albania¹² • Department for equal opportunities¹³ 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports produced by international organizations such as • UN Women, • Eige, • USAID, • OSCE • EU, CoE • Knvina till kvina

1.6 Importance of the thesis

This thesis, to our knowledge, is the first one, who attempts to provide a clear overview of the international and national legal frameworks, policies, government structures and institutional setup of gender machineries in both countries of Albania and North Macedonia. The thesis aims to compare both countries on a number of gender indicators and provide suggestions in improving gender machineries in both countries.

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https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fALB%2f5&Lang=en

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https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fMKD%2f6&Lang=en

¹¹ https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/64/national-reviews/north_macedonia.pdf?la=en&vs=5851

¹² <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/64/national-reviews/albania.pdf?la=en&vs=4915>

¹³ https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Sektor_za_Ednakvi_moznosti_ENG%5B1%5D.pdf

The extensive nature of the current desk research proofed the validity and importance of the theses as there was no single document produced which focus specifically on the functioning of the gender machineries in both countries, comparison between them and the impact that they have on the achievement of gender equality.

Using the secondary data for this research gave the possibility to use different online engines which gave the opportunity to access hundreds of documents in a short period of time and in cost effective matter.

Additionally, the documents accessed were of a very good quality as most of them either had been done by well-known international experts which professionally collected the information, or were taken from well-recognized international organizations that have gender equality in their mandate or it is part of their mandate.

Furthermore, a number of documents were retrieved from government web sites, which are referred as official documents. They usually are prepared by government institutions and have data taken directly for the government administration which makes the information reliable and the argument stronger.

Moreover, the desk research allowed to explore trends and changes of gender machineries structures and their impact on gender equality over time and be able to see the trends and their dependability by different factors including political will and political party' programs.

Lastly, while the desk research has some limitations including the risk of data collected by others and not from oneself which in lesser extent makes some of them inappropriate for this specific research. On the other side since from the biggening the research question was well defined, therefore sources and information have been extracted based on other researchers' goals and objectives, different form the one that we are exploring in the current thesis.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

In order to answer the research questions of the current thesis, this section will first provide a *background of the study main concepts*, briefly outlining the stages of establishing gender machineries in the country (including different definitions).

Then, *a historical and cultural context of both Albania and North Macedonia* and their profiles of National Women Machineries in terms of policies, institutions, structures and legislation, will

be introduced. The literature review provided in this section will serve as solid basis for understanding the context and setting the framework for the research.

The last part of the thesis, will focus on the *conclusions of the research* conducted in the framework of this work.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW ON GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER MACHINERY

2.1 Background of the Main Concepts of the Thesis

The following definitions¹⁴ are provided to ensure uniformity and comprehension on the terms used throughout the thesis.

National Women Machineries (NWM): The term ‘national women machineries’ or differently referred as ‘machineries for women’s right advancement’ stands for a number of formal governmental structures/entities that have as a primary aim the improvement of the status of women rights in the country and the achievement of an equal society goals (McBride & Mazur, 2012). Based on the term ‘national women machineries’, it is important to clarify that such structures do not serve only women, rather, they aim to create a more consistent government response to the needs of both women and men in the society. More specifically, during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), the representative countries agreed on the settlement and the definition of national women machineries. As the Beijing Platform for Action indicates:

“A national women machinery refers to a policy-central-government coordinating unit, whose aim is to enhance the status of women in the country. The main role of the gender/women machineries is to support the government in taking concrete actions related to the overall gender equality mainstreaming in all policy areas.” (Paragraph 201)

As such they represent different institutions that function under the premise that governments must take lead in promoting gender equality and serve as a form of an institutionalized bureaucratic

¹⁴ <https://mlc-wels.edu/library/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/08/Plocher-Thesis.pdf>.

representation of women¹⁵. In different countries, the machineries can take different shapes and forms such as commissions, agencies, ministries, departments and government offices, and are run differently.

Gender mainstreaming¹⁶: requires that attention is given to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities across all governmental programs, policies and activities. This involves making gender perspectives – what women and men do and the resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more accessible to all¹⁷.

“Gender refers to the social and cultural differences between sexes rather than the biological ones. It has to do with the characteristics and norms associated with being a male and/or a female in a certain society. It indicates what is expected, valued and allowed for each of the sexes in that culture”¹⁸. The gender norms, characteristics and behaviors are socially constructed and learned through socialization processes. They are context and time-specific and changeable. All societies are regulated by gender roles, which define shared who is going to do what, shared responsibilities, different access to resources and opportunities, as well as decision-making opportunities¹⁹. Most of the time, reflecting unequal share between genders. While, gender systems are established in different socio-cultural contexts, the gender roles are learned during life, and they are not static but can change during the time. Gender systems are strongly influenced by education, political structures, economic systems, legislature and strongly effected by tradition and cultural values.

“Empowerment of women refers to a process which aim helping women and young girls gaining power and control over their own choices. It involves activities such as awareness-raising, building self-confidence and expansion of choices. Empowerment processes, in a given society, aim to transform the existing cultural and institutional traditional structures which reinforce and perpetuate rigid gender stereotypes, discrimination and inequality. The process of empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. Actions that aim to promote the empowerment

¹⁵ https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/E.ESCWA_.ECW_.2019.4.pdf.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>.

of women should facilitate women's articulation of their needs and priorities and a more active role in promoting these interests and needs"²⁰. Empowerment of women cannot be achieved in a vacuum; men, institutions and governments must be brought along in the process of change²¹.

Gender Equality (equality between women and men) ²²: means that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female. While talking about equality, nobody should understand as women and men will be the same. It is one of the fundamental human rights and implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men²³. "In order to guarantee equality, a society has to take care that the needs and the priorities of both women and men are taken into account and have the same value in the decision-making processes. Equality between women and men is a fundamental human right.

2.2 International Conventions and Platforms for setting National Gender Machineries

The principle of non-discrimination represents the starting point for promoting an equal society²⁴. The discrimination can take many forms as based on sex, gender, language, religion, political status and many more²⁵. All countries, to a certain point are obliged to respect human rights and guarantee the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Therefore, it is the duty of the governments to guarantee an equal treatment to all their citizens, irrespective of their gender, as a basic human right. As such, most of the times, governments are obliged to sign a number of conventions which lead them on setting National Gender Machineries against non-discrimination and gender equality. In doing so, they are instructed by a number of conventions such as:

- 1) The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981)

²⁰ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>.

²² <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf>

²³ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>.

²⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/0900000168058fef2>.

²⁵ The listed grounds of discrimination refer to Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- 2) The Nairobi Conference on Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985)
- 3) The Beijing Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women (1995)
- 4) The Istanbul Convention (2012)

The **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1981)** refers to a specialized legally human rights binding instrument for the States and governments, which indicates obligations that the States have to comply with in order to fight discrimination based on sex.

CEDAW Article 1:

Upon common agreement the term “discrimination against women” refers to any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field²⁶.

CEDAW Article 2:

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake: a) to embody the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle²⁷.

Apart from guaranteeing non-discrimination as a basic human right, States, in several international world conferences on women, have expressed their commitment towards the achievement of substantive equality for women by adopting declarations and plan of actions²⁸. In

²⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>.

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https://books.google.al/books?id=HAENi8BnCrMC&pg=PA71&lpg=PA71&dq=yet+incorporated+therein+ensure+law+appropriate+means+practical+realisation+principle&source=bl&ots=vtWzulzuyv&sig=ACfU3U2ZcVmzKZGStK3xxkoNeauU_zvVjw&hl=en&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=yet%20incorporated%20therein%20ensure%20law%20appropriate%20means%20practical%20realisation%20principle&f=false

²⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

the **Nairobi Conference on Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women**²⁹, among others was concluded:

Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women Basic strategies / Paragraph 57:

“Appropriate governmental machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women should be established where it is lacking. To be effective, the machineries have to be settled at high governmental level such as line ministries and have to be allocated appropriate resources, commitment, and status to advise and control all government policies in terms of gender mainstreaming. If these machineries are established on the aforementioned terms then, they are expected to play an essential role in enhancing the status of women in the country. This can be further achieved through collaboration with various actors such as ministries, governmental agencies, and civil society”³⁰.

With regard to **the Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995)**, they accentuate the importance of the “*institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women*” as one of the main areas of concern in addressing gender equality worldwide. The Platform comes with a list of recommendations to be taken by governments in order to ensure an effective functioning of the national machineries³¹.

Beijing Platform for Action/ Article 201:

“A national machinery represents a central policy governmental unit; whose role is to coordinate with other agencies and advance the status of women rights in the country. The main task of the national gender machinery is to recommend and support the government in its gender mainstreaming efforts.

In order to guarantee the highest functioning possible of gender machinery, the government should provide: first, sufficient resources (both monetary and in hum resources); second, locate the structure at a higher position under the cabinet minister; third, provide to the machinery

²⁹ The United Nations Decade for Women was opened in 1975 by the Mexico City Conference for Women, underwent a mid-term stocktaking in Copenhagen in 1980 and culminated with the Nairobi Conference (1985).

³⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

³¹ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

enough status and autonomy so to influence governmental policies; and last, decentralize its services in terms of planning, implementation and monitoring of activities that aim increasing equal opportunities in the country ”³².

Beijing Platform for Action/ Article 202:

“In addressing the issue of mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women, Governments and others should promote an active and visible policy on mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively.

Strategic objectives:

- Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies;
- Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs and projects;
- Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation”³³.

“The aforementioned conventions and platforms are legally binding and envisage appropriate actions to be undertaken by the States Parties in order to fulfil the principle of non-discrimination and equality of women and men”³⁴

2.3 Stages of establishment of National Gender Machineries ³⁵

According to Testolin (2001), the following steps are to be followed in order to set up national gender machineries.

³² <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019>

³³ <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019>

³⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

³⁵ Testolin G. (2001) Handbook on national machinery to promote gender equality and action plans. Guidelines for establishing and implementing national machinery to promote equality, with examples of good practice.

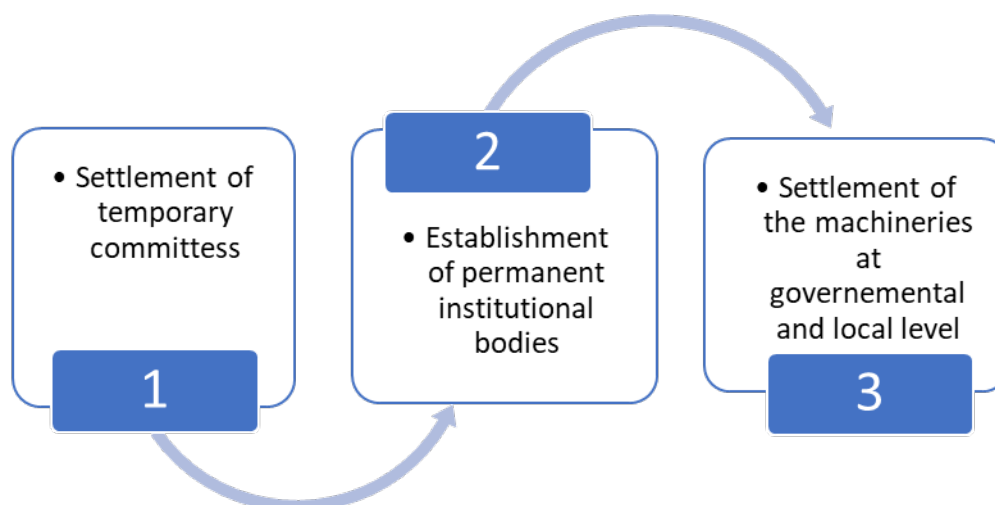


Figure 1. Guidelines for establishing National Gender Machineries (Testolin, 2001)

1. Settlement of Temporary Committees

Permanent governmental body agencies usually are experimented first as temporary bodies, usually in terms of working groups.³⁶

The working groups can have several obligations and tasks such as:

- preparing an overall review and appraisal of the role and situation of women in the restructuring process;³⁷
- identifying the key areas of concern and action;³⁸
- reviewing and using existing information on women and developing a segregated system of data collection by gender;³⁹
- developing adequate legislations that match the new conditions and protects women's rights effectively;⁴⁰
- identifying specific activities that should be considers by the respective institutions to achieve gender equality;

These working groups/committees are participatory in nature and have as members different stakeholders, usually women and men from different ethnic, educations background and status in the society. The process is much more participatory as the goal of the committee is to learn the

³⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

³⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

³⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

³⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

⁴⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

views and the opinion of its members. Usually, the temporary committee is time-bounded and the members are appointed by the government for the period of time.

Experts, especially the one which are well educated in gender statistics and policy formulations as well as researcher in the field of social and economic rights are those who do most of the preparatory work and play the role of the experts during different policy debates.

These committees aim at pushing the gender equality agenda by supporting with technical expertise different part of the policy implementation and making the gender inequalities visible through different awareness campaign and advocacy efforts.

The final document produced by the Committee is distributed widely especially to those which the topic is relevant to them and then after final consultations with the local, central and regional government representatives a final doc is being produced and endorsed by the government of future actions and implementation.

2.4 Establishment of permanent Institutional Bodies to promote Gender Equality

The establishment of the institutional permanent bodies varies from country to country. Depending by the political will and the state top priorities, the national machineries differ from country to country in terms of composition, structure and mandates. There is also a large variation regarding financial and personnel resources of the bodies⁴¹, depending on the State's vision and commitment towards equality goals.

Based on the definition of national gender machineries, their main function is to promote equal opportunities, anti-discrimination law(s) and to monitor government policies.

“National machineries are mostly linked to the government structures. In most common practices, the countries have an independent equality ministry”⁴², which can either be autonomous or together with another Ministry, depending also by the political will in meeting gender equality goals. In those countries, where it doesn't exist a special ministry dedicated to gender equality, then the machineries come under the structured form of a department or ¹⁰ unit

⁴¹ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

⁴² <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

within a ministry. In most of the cases, it is the ministry of labor and social affairs, who also includes the department of gender.

Agencies, sub-committees or councils can also act as part of a gender machinery. In such role, they are usually asked to set up and implement national gender equality action plans⁴³. In most of the countries there exist also some independent, autonomous systems in the form Ombud's, equality council or agencies.

The machineries among others are involved in activities such as research, training, lobby and advocacy, elaboration of specific projects and action plans.⁴⁴

2.5 Settlement of Machineries at Central and Local Governmental Levels

The national machineries at central level, most of the times are settled within the ministry of social affairs or Ministry of Health who takes the responsibility to look at the government decisions with gender lenses and give opinions about gender equality as well as initiate specific laws and decisions on gender equality. Within the ministry itself, there exist a division named the **Equality Affairs Office**.

The office, in most of the European countries, covers several roles such as:

1. "Checking bills that contain proposals for laws or national plans;
2. Implementing national campaigns on promoting gender equality;
3. Participation in other committees and working groups, initiatives and negotiations related to gender equality society goals;
4. Co-ordination and preparation of a multi-sectorial actions plans for the promotion of equality among all other ministries.
5. Assisting various ministries with expertise in gender mainstreaming if asked by the Parliament or the government itself.
6. Continuous monitoring of the gender targets which have been set by various national strategies"⁴⁵.

⁴³ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

⁴⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

⁴⁵ Testolin G. (2001) Handbook on national machinery to promote gender equality and action plans. Guidelines for establishing and implementing national machinery to promote equality, with examples of good practice.

Apart from the Equality Affairs Office, countries are recommended to decentralize the service through **Gender Focal Points**. Their task and role foresee mostly introducing a gender perspective within a certain institution and lobby towards making gender mainstreaming part of policy area of the institution either this be a ministry or an agency⁴⁶. Sometimes their roles, extends further into promoting equal opportunities in the personnel of the ministry or agency itself. Sometimes, they cover also other responsibilities, however, the mere fact that a ministry or an agency has such a role is an indication of the good will of the agency itself to promote equality.

In addition to the Equality Affairs Office and the Focal Points, which aim is to promote gender equality, several countries have **Parliamentary Bodies** as part of the national gender machineries. The parliamentary bodies usually are present in those countries where the number of deputy women representatives in the Parliament is low, or where the aforementioned structures (e.g., the Equality Affairs Office and Focal Points) are either missing or lacking a clear mandate regarding gender equality. In most countries, where the proportion of women in the parliament is very low (up to 30%), it is common practice to form so-called women's alliances regardless of the political affiliation. Such alliances aim to put women together in discussing issues and setting in the parliamentary agenda a common gender strategy. In almost all these types of body they experience the same resistance from men members of parliament to have them on the side of voting for legislation which will have direct impact on women's life.

Their tasks may include:

- Organize public hearing based on which changes of the legislations or initiation of new legislations takes place. Ask for monitoring reports on the situation of specific gender equality issue and initiate parliamentary discussion based on that.
- Fight for women's rights and identify actions to change the situation;
- Give advice, adopt resolution, produce surveys and studies related to gender issues;
- Request evidence-based policy analyses on gender equality and asks for specific gender data gathering. Additionally, ask for initiation of legislative developments as per the identified need.

⁴⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/090000168058fef2>

The composition of the gender working body is not unique and it depends by several factors such as the total number of MPs or representation of political parties within the committee.

Whereas, at **local governmental level**, the committee established by the municipality councils is the main body on gender equality. The role of the equality committees at local level stands for creating and coordinating equality and gender mainstreaming action plans, and observing implementation of such action plans, and making recommendations where particular issues arise. In summary, the establishment of national machineries at central and local governmental level and their efficiency highly depends by the political will. An efficient machinery defines if the equality efforts at national, regional and local level will be implemented, or will merely remain at policy level. Only if the quota of women participating in the local government is fulfilled and the demand of CSOs for gender equality is increased then the overall environment will be pro gender equality.

2.6 National Action Plans

“National action plans refer to strategic actions and commitments that governments undertake in order to advance certain questions, such as education, or in our case gender equality. Up to now, most of the equality action plans approved by the member States of the European Council have been set up and framed accordingly after the Beijing World Conference on Women. In most of the times, the national strategies have been directly taken from the Beijing Platform for Action, therefore, addressing specific areas of concern. Even though the national action plans are proposed by the ministry of lines or even from the Parliament itself, their main aim of is to hold accountable the central government in taking responsibility for the achievement of gender equality goals. The real following up of an action plan is based on the political activity of the minister and on the political will of the government. Good national action plans set up targets and imply compulsory measures and procedures. Targets are important as far as they serve as monitory tools towards the action plan and measure the progress made”.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Testolin G. (2001) Handbook on national machinery to promote gender equality and action plans. Guidelines for establishing and implementing national machinery to promote equality, with examples of good practice.

2.7 Efficiency of National Gender/Women Machineries (NWM)

Two main principles are important when defining if the national gender machineries will be efficient or not. First principle refers to the **accountability**. As per definition the gender machineries represent the main governmental structures which monitor and report about the situation of women rights in the country. As such they should represent the voice of women and especially the one left behind and they should be the voice of women CSOs and advocate for their needs and interest in the government, in Parliament and different international fora. As part of their mission gender machineries should make sure that they become the body which inform citizens about the real situation of women and men in the country.

The second important principle refers **autonomy**. Gender Machineries should be independent body in order to be able to protect the interests of women and girls and report without any bias to the government institutions, parliament, in different conventions and international bodies. They should not depend on the government in power and not to serve to any political parties. “In order for the national machineries to be efficient, there should always be a balance between accountability and autonomy. “⁴⁸

3.GENDER LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK ALBANIA

3.1 Regional Background and Context

Before thoroughly discussing the status of gender machineries in Albania and North Macedonia, first it is important to provide a short historical context. Both countries till in 90s, like most of the east European countries have had a socialist political and socio-economical regime. The ruling ideology of socialism, as per shared values granted women equal political rights with men, access to free education, and promoted women in the labor market. Even though, the socialist ideology looked quite progressive in paper, in reality it was characterized with strong gender stereotypes and rigid gender roles based on traditional patriarchal culture. With the systemic

changes of the 90's, not only the communist regimes fell, but also the situation of women rights changed. Since the contextual and political changes, in both countries were kind of imposed from up, such changes were considered superficial and did not consider the role of women within the family, in the private sphere, and therefore, did not produce any substantial changing on gender norms⁴⁹. After the 90's together with the rest of Eastern Europe, both Albania and North Macedonia, started a long process of transition aimed at dismantling the old system of socialism. In order to make progress and start the accession process towards the EU, both countries, first, had to align their legislation with the EU and second, had to ratify a number of treaties, conventions and enable the national women machineries. The pressure from the EU to create such machineries attached to the government served as a way to establish more formal and non-formal governmental infrastructures that help the creation of equal societies. Specifically, EU accentuates several fields within the area of gender equality and women rights to be taken care of by each country NWMs such as: 1) equal participation of women on political, decision making processes, 2) economic empowerment of women, 3) tackling sexual and reproductive health rights,⁵⁰ 4) women's safety, including all forms of gender-based violence and human trafficking.

In this line, both countries have ratified a number of European conventions to meet the aforementioned goals. For example, Albania ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 and Northern Macedonia⁵¹ in 1994. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which is tasked with monitoring CEDAW, over years, has repeatedly expressed the concern on the limited capacities of the NWMs to deliver on their intended goals under the Convention⁵². Furthermore, it has noted the importance of giving urgent priority to strengthening their institutional capacity and providing them with the mandate, decision-making power and human, technical and financial resources necessary to work effectively and to influence the formulation, design and implementation of public policies focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women⁵³. Up to now, both Albania and Macedonia have established NWMs as a way to promote equal society goals and improve status of women rights, yet, there still exist a number of aforementioned relevant issues to be addressed. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, Albania is ranked

⁴⁹ Women's rights in Western Balkans Study Report, 2019

⁵⁰ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Republic_of_North_Macedonia.pdf.

⁵¹ https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/gender_equality_index_albania.pdf.

⁵² https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/E.ESCWA_ECW_2019.4.pdf.

⁵³ See, for example, CEDAW/C/LBN/CO/4-5, para. 24(a); CEDAW/C/IRQ/CO/4-6, para. 20

25th among 156 countries on its efforts to achieve gender equality goals, whereas North Macedonia is ranked in the 73 position out of 156 countries.

On March 2020, the Council of the European Union decided to open accession negotiations⁵⁴ with both Albania and North Macedonia. As part of the EU accession processes, both countries are foreseen to receive bilateral financial and technical assistance for adopting the EU acquis -a body of EU laws, rules, resolutions, declarations, regulations, directives and treaties⁵⁵. This, per se, entails implementing a series of reforms in various sectors and across levels of governance. Gender equality law is part of the EU acquis⁵⁶. As part of EU process, the transposition of gender equality is required to be included in the national legislation followed by the enforcement of achievements of agreed gender targets and indicators. During the pre-accession period, both countries have made significant progress on gender equality, however, as evidenced by EU Annual Reports and analysis of national gender indicators, implementation significantly lags behind. For example, in all Western Balkan countries, including Albania and North Macedonia, it is noted a huge discrepancy between developing progressive laws related to gender mainstreaming and lack of budgets and application in practice. NWM continues to be weak and to depend very much on the government political will. Additionally, the transition period and economic stability influenced heavily their performance. NWM doesn't make any difference on the turnover especially when the government change their leadership and sometime even the technical staff change. These factors hamper the performance and put them in weak position. Therefore, up to now, both Albania and Northern Macedonia, face numerous problems regarding the effective implementation of gender equality mechanisms⁵⁷, which will be discussed more thoroughly throughout the thesis.

3.2 Albania country profile

In Albania, national women machineries have been improved since 90^s in order to promote gender equality. A number of conventions, policies and strategies have been approved together with the establishment of an institutional framework in ensuring gender equality.

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accession_of_North_Macedonia_to_the_European_Union.

⁵⁵ <https://www.unjobnet.org/jobs/detail/26869474>.

⁵⁶ Albania Gender Equality Brief, 2020

⁵⁷ Women's rights in Western Balkans Study Report, 2019

3.3 Albania Conventions

Albania has ratified a number of conventions regarding women rights and gender equality. More specifically, the country has ratified the following conventions in the following years:

- **CEDAW Convention (1993)**
- **Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (1995).**
- **Istanbul Convention (2012)**

Based on each of the conventions, the country has to fulfill a number of obligations with regard to women rights and gender equality goals. Furthermore, the country who has ratified the aforementioned conventions has to regularly follow a number of recommendations and report the level of their implementations. For example, in 2014 the Government of Albania submitted the fourth periodic report to the CEDAW committee on the situation of women rights in the country; in 2017, it submitted to GREVIO committee, the first report on the situation and progress the country made regarding the implementation of the Istanbul Convention; and in 2019, a big national report was prepared showing the real situation of women rights and gender machineries in the country as indicated per the Beijing +25 Platform for Action. Both reports of the Istanbul convention together with the one regarding Beijing +25 Platform were accompanied by shadow reports from the Ombudsman and civil society organizations. Usually, when compiling the reports, the government is asked to organize a number of consultations and roundtables with different stakeholders from civil society, international partners and the Alliance of Women Members of Parliament, so to have a clear representative view of the situation of gender equality in the country”⁵⁸.

3.3 Albania Legislation and Strategies

Albania has ratified a number of conventions regarding women rights and gender equality. More specifically, the country has ratified the following conventions in the following years:

- **CEDAW Convention (1993)**

⁵⁸http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

- **Beijing Platform for Action and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (1995).**
- **Istanbul Convention (2012)**

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3.4 Abania Institutional Framework

Along the years, the Albanian parliament, has taken different important steps in tackling the issues of gender inequality in the country, and has developed several structures in supporting overall gender mainstreaming. Under the **permanent Parliamentary Commission on Labor, Social Issues and Health committee**, in 2017, it was established the **Sub Commission of Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence Against Women**. To the sub commission is delegated the main task of controlling and overseeing the implementation of the **National Strategy on Gender Equality** in the country. Furthermore, the sub-commission has the responsibility to take specific initiatives related to GBV and DV and to report in the parliament about situation of women rights in the country. From the year of establishment until now the

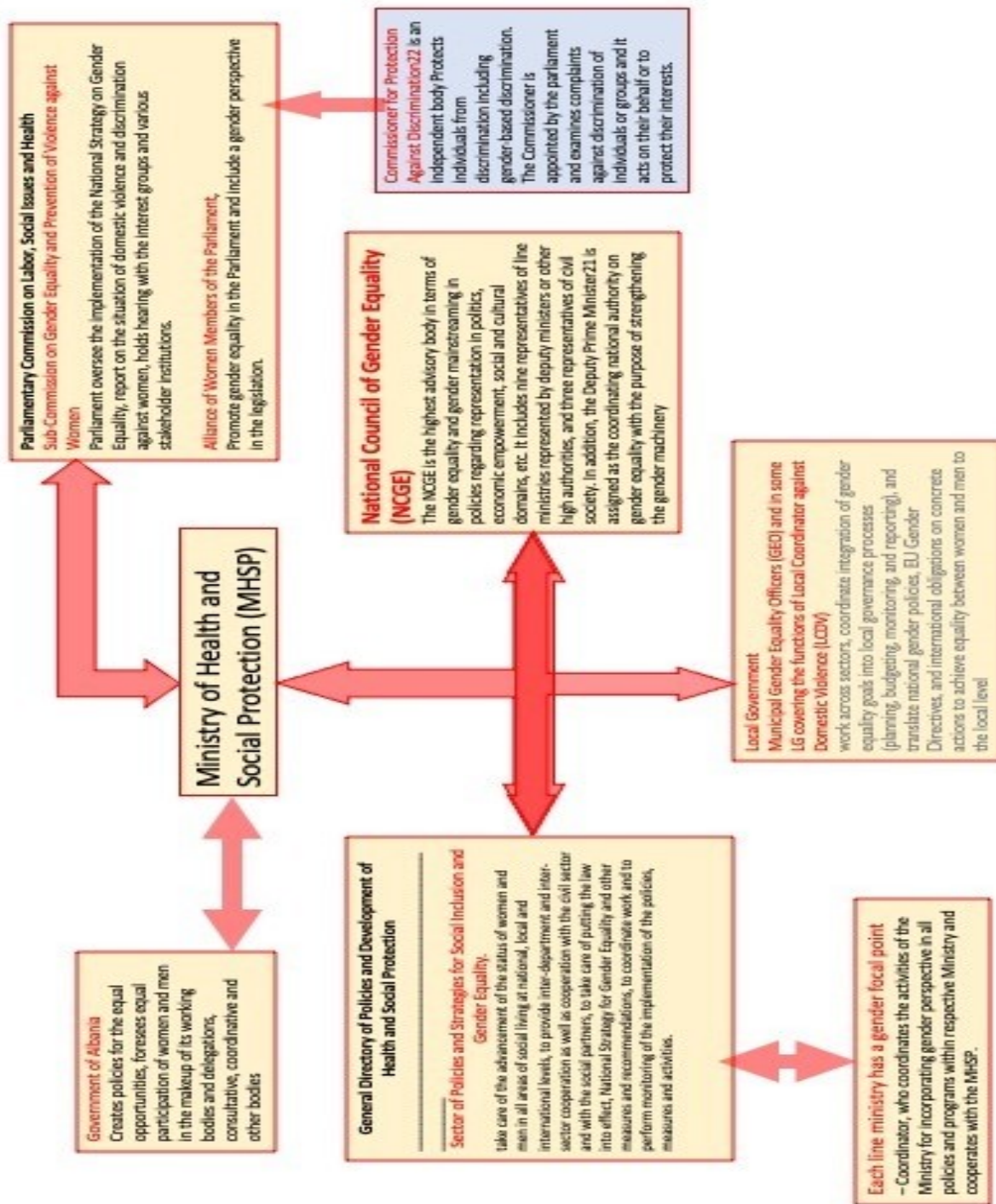
⁵⁹http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

commission held several public hearings with the representatives of line ministries in charge of gender equality, CSOs and gender advocate.

Among other bodies, in 2013, within the parliament was created the **Alliance of Women Members of the Parliament**. The members of the alliance are all women parliamentary deputies, irrespective of their political affiliation and have one main goal that of promoting gender equality in all Parliamentary initiatives and also lobby in including a gender perspective in the all the legislations.

Lastly, in 2010, it was nominated for the first time **the Commissioner for Protection Against Discrimination**⁶⁰. This independent body acts on behalf of individuals and groups which their rights have been violated including gender-based discriminations. The commissioner in its mandate has the right to launch different investigation including administrative one and can make recommendations and issue decisions and impose sanctions. The commissioner has been very active in the last years and has opened several cases especially related to Violence against women and girls.

⁶⁰ UNWOMEN and UNDP. (2016). "Gender Brief Albania." https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field_percent20office_percent20eca/attachments/publications/country/albania/unw_percent20gender_percent20brief_percent20albania_percent202016_en_web.pdf?la=en&vs=5235



3.5 Situation of gender equality in Albania according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021 ⁶¹

	ALBANIA			
	2006 score		2021 score	
Global Gender Gap Index	61	0.661	25	0.770
Economic Participation and Opportunity	38	0.661	35	0.748
Educational Attainment	58	0.989	42	0.999
Health and Survival	110	0.955	147	0.956
Political Empowerment	105	0.038	30	0.377

According to the Global Gender Gap Index, the country of Albania is ranked 25th out of 156 countries all over the world regarding its efforts in achieving gender equality goals. The country has an estimated score of 0.770 ranging from 0 (very bad) to 1(equal) to 2 (very good). It is noted that Albania has made visible progress from 2006 for example, upscaling 36 positions. In 2006, the country was ranked at 61st position, whereas now in 2021 is at 25th position. However, as seen by the table above there some fields that still much work is needed and others where the progress is quite visible. For example, there is a big shift regarding political empowerment, where the country moved from the 105th position to the 31st, even though up to now no woman has been elected as the head of the state and still the average score is very low, only 0.377. Improvement have been noticed also with regard economic participation and equal opportunities, and also in the field of educational attainment. Health and survival fields, although it seems that the country rank is low and there was a decrease of positioning along the years, if checked the average score, it is noted that the country has a good profile regarding health and survival opportunities provided form women and men and there was not a big difference among the years. In relation to the above indicators, the following table gives a more specific view of the gender indicators divided for specific fields in the country. More specifically see the table below.

⁶¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

ALBANIA		
	rank	Score
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY	35	0.748
Labor force participation rate, %	86	0.794
Wage equality for similar work, 1-7 (best)	2	0.846
Estimated earned income, int'l \$ 1,000	88	0.588
Legislators, senior officials and managers, %	69	0.518
Professional and technical workers, %	1	1.000
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	42	0.999
Literacy rate, %	65	0.992
Enrolment in primary education, %	1	1.000
Enrolment in secondary education, %	1	1.000
Enrolment in tertiary education, %	1	1.000
HEALTH AND SURVIVAL	147	0.956
Sex ratio at birth, %	150	0.922
Healthy life expectancy, years	85	1.034
POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	30	0.377
Women in parliament, %	48	0.418
Women in ministerial positions, %	1	1.000
Years with female/male head of state (last 50)	76	0.000

As indicated in the table, with regard to women economic participation and providing opportunities for women the country is doing well with regard to no discrimination regarding professional and technical workers, whereas it is noted that a lot of work must be done by the

country with regard to achieve gender equality among senior officials and managers, meaning needing more women in leading positions. Interesting enough, the country is rated on a second place related to wage equality for similar work between men and women. This means that Albania is doing pretty well and has achieved some good scores with regard to economic participation and opportunities and guaranteeing equal wages for same jobs, however there is a need in increasing the earned income in the country, a field the government has to work more.

As already mentioned, the country has done a good job regarding educational attainment and enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary education. Health and survival indicators seem good in terms of average score, even though the ranking is not high, which mean there is still space for improvement.

Last but not least, the country has a good ranking score in relation to women in parliament and women in ministerial positions, but it scores 0 regarding years with females as head of state.

As such, based on the above data, Albania even though seemingly a progressive country in terms of gender equality goals, needs to include more women in leading positions and nominate women as head of the country.

4.GENDER LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONA

4.1 North Macedonia Conventions

The Republic of North Macedonia has ratified a number of conventions regarding women rights and gender equality. More specifically, the country has ratified the following conventions in the following years:

- **CEDAW Convention (1994)**
- **The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995)**
- **The Istanbul Convention (2018)**

Upon ratifications of the aforementioned conventions, the country has put significant efforts towards gender equality goals. More specifically the Government has made several efforts and aims to end every form of discrimination and form of violence against all women and girls ⁶².

⁶² <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/north-macedonia>

For example, immediately after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in October 2018, the country has adopted the Action Plan for its implementation until 2023. The Action Plan provides a comprehensive framework for implementation of the Istanbul Convention and aims to improve the current national legal and policy system to meet the Istanbul criteria.

With regard to political representation, the government has committed to make several efforts in enhancing women's full participation at the decision-making levels and provide leadership opportunities. Whereas, in relation to policies and legislation, the government has expressed willingness to further strengthen the current policies and legislations that aim at increasing gender equality parameters in the country together with implementation of reforms that empower women economically⁶³.

The country gender equality goals are aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, yet the localized SDG gender indicators are not mentioned anywhere by the government.

4.2 North Macedonia Legislations and Strategies⁶⁴

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia that all citizens are equal before the law and that no one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion and many others.

In 2006, the Republic of North Macedonia parliament approved **The Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, Gender Equality in Society**, which was later amended (in 2012) according to EU Directives. The Law regulates the issues of equal treatment between women and men.

Additionally, in 2010, the government of North Macedonia approved **the Non-discrimination Law**, (amended further in 2019). The law protects the citizens against any kind of discrimination form and is harmonized with the international human rights standards and EU directives for non-discrimination.

In 2015, it was approved the **Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection against Domestic Violence**. The law is systemic in nature and foresees the establishment of a number of mechanisms in order to prevent, protect and combat domestic violence. More specifically, the

⁶³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/women/decisions>.

⁶⁴ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/Beijing_20/Republic_of_North_Macedonia.pdf

law demands by all actors both at a national and local level to undertake a number of actions to tackle the phenomena of DV in the country such as: awareness raising of public officials, enactment of institutions in the prevention and protection of GBV victims and many more.

Among other measures regarding gender equality, in 2015, the **Electoral Code** was amended and improved to introduce the gender quota, raising it to 40 %. The quota obliged the political parties to introduce women in their lists both at central and local governmental level. More specifically, out of each three places on the list, one of them is a woman. The law intends to increase the representation of women in political decision making.

Under EU directives, the North Macedonian parliament, in 2015, introduced the equal pay for women and men under the **Law of Labor Relations**, whereas, in 2017, the country introduced the **Law on Minimum Salary** which was equalized for both women and men.

Among others, the North Republic of Macedonia, has further amended The Law on Labor Relations with equal application of parental leave, hence recognizing the joint responsibility of both parents' in upbringing children. And, in 2019 the government approved the **Law on Termination of Pregnancy**. The law aims to prevent the endangerment of women's health and wellbeing.

In 2018 the **Law on Social Protection** was amended. The amendments of the law aimed to enhance social protection for vulnerable categories such as the victims of GBV and DV, thus reducing the level of poverty.

In 2018, Amendments to the **Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education** were adopted in line with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-2020.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2013-2020 and the subsequent **National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGE) 2018–2020** are at the core of all policy and budgetary making process and the base for changes of the legislative frameworks on gender equality in North Macedonia. Among others, the Strategy takes special care in introducing a clear definition on gender-based violence (GBV).

The Gender Equality Strategy, in the framework of 7 years has settle the following strategic objectives:

- Achieving gender equality by means of functional support mechanisms at the national and local level;
- Harmonizing indicators for measuring the progress of gender equality;
- Providing gender- disaggregated statistics;
- Integrating gender-responsive budgeting in policy and program creation;
- Sensitizing the public to the various forms of violence against women;
- Strengthening institutional capacities for taking actions aimed at protection of such victims;
- Harmonizing the legislation with the EU and international standards;
- Enhancing the level of gender equality in priority thematic areas, such as healthcare, education and employment;
- Building a culture of equal opportunities and promoting equal treatment and nondiscrimination on the ground of sex.

Parallely with the Gender Equality Strategy Plan, the Government of North Macedonia has approved **the 2012-2017 Strategy for Introducing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)**, which focused on three strategic areas:

- 1) Introducing a gender perspective on the country and region budget at central and local level;
- 2) Improve the legal framework regarding gender responsive budgeting, and
- 3) Strengthen the institutional mechanisms and capacities in relation to having a gender perspective when approving policies, programs and budgets.

In compliance with the strategy, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia amended the budget circular (instructions) in 2013, by introducing a specific gender provision for central level budget users. To operationalize the Strategy on Gender Responsive Budgeting and facilitate the implementation of the new requirement in the budget circular, a Methodology on gender responsive budgeting was adopted by the Government in 2014.

From 2013 to 2018, fourteen-line Ministries and 3 state institutions have successfully implemented the methodology and prepared **Gender Budgetary Statements** for selected sectorial programs. These Statements are submitted together with the budget requests for the upcoming year to the Ministry of Finance. Introducing gender responsive budgeting is a great achievement because it serves as a mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability of

the institutions. It enables to track spending and promote equal opportunities for women on a central and local level.

In addition, in 2018 the government for the first time introduced gender in the instructions for the development of line ministries triennial strategic plans, which further strengthens the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming at national level.

Several other strategies have developed and ratified by the Government of North Macedonia aiming to improve the situation of women in the country such as:

- (i) **the National Strategy and National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration (2017–2020);**
- (ii) **the National Employment Strategy (2016-2020)** that aims to increase employment, job quality and productivity, with special focus on vulnerable groups of population and women;
- (iii) **the National Reproduction Health Strategy (2010-2020)**
- (iv) **the Safe Motherhood Strategy (2016)** developed in order to comply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global and regional initiatives.
- (v) **The Strategy for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship for 2018-2023** aiming at strengthening the economic empowerment of women by creating a favorable business climate and providing support for the development of women's entrepreneurial potential.

4.3 North Macedonia Institutional Framework

The government of the North Republic of Macedonia has made it as a top priority the achievement of gender equality goals and the rising status of the women. Therefore, in 2007, it was created **The Department for Equal Opportunities** within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Since its creation the department consists of two units:

- (i) **The Unit for Gender Equality** and
- (ii) **the Unit for Prevention and Protection against any kind of Discrimination.**

The mission of the Department for Equal Opportunities is the guaranteeing of a wide gender mainstreaming approach at all governmental levels, in order to provide better economic and social status for all women. In addition, the Department is hold accountable in pushing further

the implementation of positive legal regulations in the country. For example, one of the most important actions that the department has taken is the continuous lobbying toward all the governmental bodies, institutions and agencies regarding the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, together with the National Action Plan on Gender Equality.

Such activities are always organized in cooperation with other institutions, as well as civil society actors and the social partners.

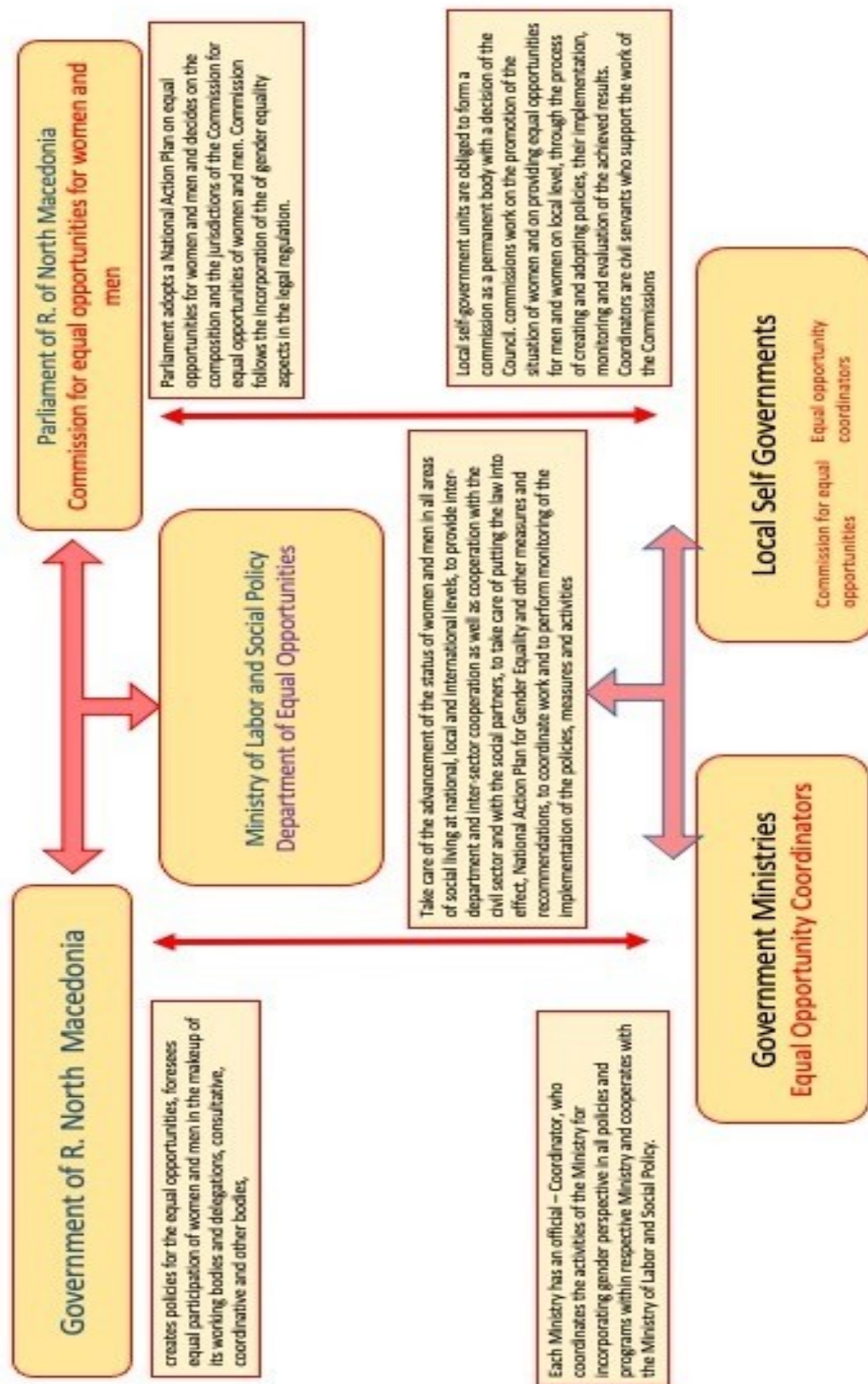
As part of the national action plan on gender equality, the government has made it obligatory, that in each ministry and in several municipalities of the country, to be appointed a gender coordinator, whose direct responsibility is to monitor and offer recommendation with regard to gender mainstreaming policies within that certain institution. Such figures differently are called as **deputy coordinators for equal opportunities for women**.

Another important step taken by the Government of Republic of North Macedonia with regard of achievement society gender equality goals, has been the establishment of a **Multidisciplinary, Inter-Sectorial Consultative and Advisory Group**, which is set up is to further support the implementation of gender equality agenda and empowerment of women, including the implementation of Beijing Platform of Action.

Whereas, within the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia there exist also the **Commission for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men on a National level**, whose aim is to guarantee equal opportunities for all and monitor the continuous decisions taken by the parliament if they reflect a gender perspective.

Lastly, the Government of North Macedonia, in 2018, as indicated on **the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Article 21**, a **Legal Representative** was nominated at governmental level to identify, implement and monitor has been appointed procedures for identification of unequal treatment of women and men⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Sektor_z_Ednakvi_moznosti_ENG%5B1%5D.pdf



4.4 Situation of Gender Equality in North Macedonia according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2021

	NORTH MACEDONIA			
	2006 score		2021 score	
Global Gender Gap Index	28	0.698	73	0.715
Economic Participation and Opportunity	31	0.671	97	0.647
Educational Attainment	64	0.985	99	0.977
Health and Survival	101	0.964	85	0.970
Political Empowerment	28	0.173	53	0.267

Interestingly enough, as seen by the table above the country of North Macedonia, according to the Global Gender Report 2021, it has lost points along the years regarding gender equality goals. In 2006, North Macedonia was ranked the 28th country in the Global Gender Index, whereas in 2021, the country lost 45 positions and is ranked the 73^d position, out of 156 countries. Yet, if controlling for average score, it seems that the country has made some visible progress scoring from 0.698 in 2006 to 0.715 in 2021. Little differences are noticed along the years regarding economic participation and opportunity scoring 0.671 in 2006 and 0.647 in 2021, thus again losing points, same with educational attainment from 0.985 in 2006 to 0.977 in 2021. It is noted a little progress done along the years with regard to health and survival and political empowerment, however the little progress made, the country lost points in the overall ranking. In order to understand better the trending of scores, let's refer to the table below where the above gender main parameter indexes are explained more thoroughly.

NORTH MACEDONIA		
	rank	score
ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY	97	0.647
Labor force participation rate, %	108	0.708

Wage equality for similar work, 1-7 (best)	84	0.648
Estimated earned income, int'l \$ 1,000	84	0.593
Legislators, senior officials and managers, %	105	0.356
Professional and technical workers, %	1	1.000
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	99	0.977
Literacy rate, %	87	0.979
Enrolment in primary education, %	76	0.999
Enrolment in secondary education, %	133	0.917
Enrolment in tertiary education, %	1	1.000
HEALTH AND SURVIVAL	85	0.970
Sex ratio at birth, %	127	0.942
Healthy life expectancy, years	87	1.034
POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT	53	0.267
Women in parliament, %	27	0.645
Women in ministerial positions, %	80	0.267
Years with female/male head of state (last 50)	70	0.003

With regard to economic participation and opportunity, the country is scoring relatively well in relation to equal participation in the labor force and share of work between professional and technical workers. However, as noted also by the aforementioned indicators, North Macedonia is pretty low ranked related to wage equality for similar work, women senior officials and leaders and estimated earned income. It looks like the country has a lot to do regarding economic empowerment of women and providing them equal opportunities to men.

Apart from enrolment in tertiary level education, again North Macedonia is ranked quite low regarding literacy rate and enrolment of girls in primary and secondary education.

In relation to health and survival, even though the country has high scores related to the sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy, still the country is very low ranked among other countries.

Last but not least, regarding women political empowerment, the indicators are still very low. For example, the country is listed as 80th among 156 countries regarding women in ministerial positions, and in 70th place regarding women as head of states. Up to now, North Macedonia has had 2 women as head of States, which can be seen as a good indicator, however there is a need to have higher numbers, especially keeping in mind that the country is favorably listed related to women representation in the parliament, keeping the 50th position.

As per the case of Albania, also in North Macedonia there is an immediate need from the governments to increase the number of women in leading positions, especially at ministerial levels but not only. Also, there should be more women in senior and managerial levels.

Overall, it seems that the government of North Macedonia and to take a number of serious efforts to achieve gender equality in the country.

5. A CROSS-COUNTRY COMPARISON AMONG ALBANIA AND NORTH MACEDONIA RELATED TO THE IMPACT OF GENDER MACHINERIES ON GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS

5.1 Research Question 3. How is the situation of gender mainstreaming in both countries?

The aim of this chapter is to explore how gender machineries in both countries made progress and responded towards achieving the goals of the Convention for 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) and the current situation of women rights and gender equality in each country.

In the EU accession process, as already seen, both Albania and North Macedonia have developed and adopted legal and policy framework, established institutions and gender equality mechanisms, but the implementation of gender equality policies still remains a challenge⁶⁶. Although gender equality is part of the EU agenda (under the political criteria) the issues are so much interlinked that sometime is like impossible to address one and not to put efforts or solve the other one. For example, gender blind system of education brings school curricula which enforce gender stereotypes. While gender stereotypes put women in very unfavorable position in their professional life and decrease their active participation in the labor market. The situation of gender equality parameters is discussed according to the Gender Issues in the *Western Balkans Policy Brief Report*⁶⁷ and the *Global Gender Index 2021*.

⁶⁶ <https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CSF-PB-04-Gender-Issues-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

⁶⁷ <https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CSF-PB-04-Gender-Issues-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

In the table below we present the main gender parameters per country as to be compared between the two countries, but not only. As it is noticed, very little data are available regarding situation of gender-based violence (GBV) in both countries and as it will be discussed later one reason for this is referred to lack of data clarity and misconceptions regarding the phenomenon.

I judge important to attached the following table as it provides a clear overview of both countries in relation to the work done by the NWM regarding gender mainstreaming and achievement of gender equality in the country.

5.2 Selected contextual gender data Albania & North Macedonia

2021 global gender index ⁶⁸

GENERAL INDICATORS	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Total population, million people			
Albania	1.41	1.47	2.88
North Macedonia	1.04	1.04	2.08
Population growth rate, %			
Albania	0.00	-0.07	-0.07
North Macedonia	0.00	0.00	0.00
Population sex ratio (female/male), female/male ratio			
Albania	49.08	50.92	0.96
North Macedonia	49.98	50.02	1.00
WORK PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Labour force, million people			
Albania	609.9	755.6	0.45
North Macedonia	388.7	565.8	0.41
Unemployed adults, % of labour force (15-64)			
Albania	11.72	12.13	0.97
North Macedonia	18.56	16.65	1.11
Workers employed part-time, % of employed people			
Albania	24.42	15.35	1.59
North Macedonia	17.52	12.60	1.39
Gender pay gap (OECD only) %			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Proportion of unpaid work per day, female/male ratio			
Albania	-	-	6.26
North Macedonia	-	-	3.01
Advancement of women to leadership roles, 1-7 (best)			
Albania	-	-	5.76
North Macedonia	-	-	3.91
Gender parity in tech roles, 1-7 (best)			
Albania	-	-	5.51

⁶⁸ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

North Macedonia	-	-	4.93
Boards of listed companies, % board members			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Firms with female majority ownership, % firms			
Albania	20.70	79.30	0.26
North Macedonia	29.30	70.70	0.41
Firms with female top managers, % firms			
Albania	18.10	81.90	0.22
North Macedonia	21.30	78.70	0.27
Share of workers in informal sector, % workers			
Albania	53.90	59.00	1.09
North Macedonia	11.00	15.70	1.43
ACCESS TO FINANCE	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Right to hold a bank account & get credit, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.25
North Macedonia	-	-	0.00
Inheritance rights for daughters, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.25
North Macedonia	-	-	0.25
Women's access to land use, control & ownership, 0- 1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.25
North Macedonia	-	-	0.25
Women's access to non-land assets use, control & ownership, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.00
North Macedonia	-	-	0.00
CIVIL AND POLITICAL FREEDOM	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Year women received right to vote			
Albania	-	-	1920
North Macedonia	-	-	1946
Number of female heads of state to date			
Albania	-	-	0
North Macedonia	-	-	2
Election list quotas for women, national, yes/no			
Albania	n/a	n/a	Yes
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	Yes
Party membership quotas, voluntary, Yes/no			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	No
Seats held in upper house, % total seats			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Right to equal justice, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.00
North Macedonia	-	-	0.25
Right to travel outside the country, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.00
North Macedonia	-	-	0.00
FAMILY AND CARE	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Mean age of women at birth of first child			
Albania	-	-	27.5

North Macedonia	-	-	29.0
Average number of children per woman			
Albania	-	-	1.62
North Macedonia	-	-	1.50
Women's unmet demand for family planning, % women 15-49			
Albania	-	-	12.90
North Macedonia	-	-	17.20
Right to divorce, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.25
North Macedonia	-	-	0.00
Child marriage, % women 15-19			
Albania	-	-	7.20
North Macedonia	-	-	4.30
Length of maternity/paternity leave (days), weeks			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wages paid during maternity/paternity leave, % annual gross wage			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Public childcare expenditure, % GDP			
Albania	n/a	n/a	n/a
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
EDUCATION AND SKILLS	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
STEMS, attainment %			
Albania	15.20	30.01	0.51
North Macedonia	18.01	27.16	0.66
Agri., Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary, attainment %			
Albania	2.91	5.90	0.49
North Macedonia	1.25	2.59	0.48
Arts & Humanities, attainment %			
Albania	11.99	7.20	1.67
North Macedonia	16.00	10.57	1.51
Business, Admin. & Law, attainment %			
Albania	27.36	30.09	0.91
North Macedonia	28.10	30.73	0.91
Education, attainment %			
Albania	11.94	5.93	2.02
North Macedonia	5.82	2.22	2.62
Engineering, Manuf. & Construction, attainment %			
Albania	5.79	16.10	0.36
North Macedonia	9.85	14.64	0.67
Health & Welfare, attainment %			
Albania	17.51	8.07	2.17
North Macedonia	12.43	5.89	2.11
Information & Comm. Technologies, attainment %			
Albania	4.66	10.37	0.45
North Macedonia	4.00	10.04	0.40
Natural Sci., Mathematics & Statistics, attainment %			
Albania	4.75	3.53	1.34
North Macedonia	4.16	2.48	1.67
Services, attainment %			

Albania	1.25	5.29	0.24
North Macedonia	4.76	9.21	0.52
Social Sci., Journalism & Information, attainment %			
Albania	11.85	7.51	1.58
North Macedonia	13.64	11.63	1.17
Vocational training, attainment %			
Albania	1.77	7.87	0.22
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
PhD graduates, attainment %			
Albania	0.11	0.07	1.59
North Macedonia	n/a	n/a	n/a
HEALTH	FEMALE	MALE	VALUE
Maternal mortality, deaths per 100,000 live births			
Albania	-	-	15
North Macedonia	-	-	7
Prevalence of gender violence in lifetime, % women			
Albania	-	-	24.6
North Macedonia	-	-	27.7
Law permits abortion to preserve a woman's health, 0-1 (worst)			
Albania	-	-	0.00
North Macedonia	-	-	0.00
Births attended by skilled personnel, % live births			
Albania	-	-	99.80
North Macedonia	-	-	99.90
Antenatal care, at least four visits, % women 15-49			
Albania	-	-	77.80
North Macedonia	-	-	95.70

5.2 Gender Based Violence (GBV and DV) Indicators

Gender based violence together remain as one of the most critical gender-related issues in the Western Balkans⁶⁹. Among many forms of violence, it is noted, that domestic violence performed by a husband or an intimate partner is very high both Albania and North Macedonia. In Albania, around 24.6 % of women declare to have experienced at least one form of domestic violence, whereas in North Macedonia the numbers go up to around 27.7 %.

Even though both countries have signed a number of conventions and have taken a lot of action in fighting the phenomenon, the gravity of the issue remains still high.

One of the major problems faced by both countries has to do with the lack of credible and reliable data. Even though there have been a lot of efforts in developing European universal standards for collecting and reporting data, still the situation remains chaotic, thus making it more difficult in presenting the real scenario of the phenomena of domestic violence in both countries. Overall, the institutions, not only the do not have gender segregated data, but also lack

⁶⁹ Out of forty-five CSOs twenty-nine identified gender-based violence as an issue.

systematically monitoring and record of the women murdered (known as femicide phenomenon), or other forms of gender-based violence against women. As a consequence, in both countries it is difficult to tell the real size of the problem. Therefore, both Albania and North Macedonia have still a lot of work to do regarding efficient policies and legal responses towards tackling domestic violence. Up to now, several reports declare insufficient institutional response and support in helping the victims of domestic violence.

Moreover, data shows that DV is habitually qualified as a bad behavior and rarely seen as a criminal offense, where most of reported cases of end up with a warning by police.

Lastly, both countries do not have enough support services to fully support the women victims of DV and GBV, and not to mention the low number of women's shelters. Hence, the local CSOs are the ones who provide services there where government services lack.

5.3 Gender Stereotyping Indicators

A frequent cause of discrimination against women are gender stereotypes which are “preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex”⁷⁰.

Although predominantly in patriarchal societies, gender stereotypes have a disproportionate negative impact on both women and men and limit their capacities to fully participate and enjoy life. Such impact is usually worse on young girls and women and less on boys and men. This is true particularly for the less developed countries, yet, the developed countries also are not immune to gender stereotyping as shown by the latest Eurobarometer conducted in the EU-28 indicating that “almost seven in ten respondents think women are more likely than men to make decisions based on their emotions”⁷¹.

As it is mentioned before gender is included in the highest laws in both countries and is part of the constitutions, again gender inequalities are deeply rooted to traditional values and

⁷⁰ Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe. Gender Equality Glossary, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016805963eb19> Eurobarometer. G

⁷¹ Eurobarometer. Gender Equality, Stereotypes and Women in Politics, Survey Summary. European Commission, 2017. p. 5. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/surveyKy/2154>

conservative societies. For example, according to a national survey conducted in 2015⁷², in Albania, 70 percent of the respondents reported and agreed that it was better for them that the husband worked and the wife took care of the family.

Overall, the gender roles usually are promoted and reinforced by many institutions, especially by the media and the education. In the case of Albania and North Macedonia, still patriarchal in nature, media and education can serve as powerful tools in creating gender transformative content and break stereotypes. They can and should be as well influential actors in promoting gender equality.

Several analyses⁷³ in the region have shown the duality of gender stereotypes from the media reporting. Women in both countries are presented to the audience as either objects and sex-symbols or as devoted mothers/wives.

With regard to DV and femicide, when reporting, it is noted that the media is biased and there is usually male side of story portrayed, thus diminishing the gravity of the violence and further stigmatizing the victims⁷⁴.

Similarly, media is one of the sectors which is mostly male dominated especially at the editorial level, while women are seen mostly as the one which can stand beautifully in the TV or deals with social problems mostly.

Although some progress has been done on the inclusion of gender stereotypes in education, still school curricula remain as a challenge. Most of the books in both countries in all level of education reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes.

Actual research indicates that educational curricula are characterized by a gender-biased language (the preference of the masculine over the feminine), with male characters being more predominant⁷⁵.

⁷² UNDP. Public Perceptions and Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Albania. UNDP, January 2016, Tirana, p. 31. Available at: <http://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/public-perceptions-and-attitude-towards-gender-equality-in-alban.html>

⁷³ Abazi J (2014) Media Situation in Kosovo – Gender Representation. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_37921-1522-1-30.pdf?140602103132

⁷⁴ Zorica Mršević. Kvalitativna analiza medijskog izveštavanja o nasilju nad ženama u Srbiji. UNDP, Beograd, 2013.

https://www.sigurnakuca.net/upload/documents/Multisektorska_saradnja/Kvantitativna%20analiza%20medijskih%20sad%C5%BEaja%20o%20nasilju%20nad%20%C5%BEenam

⁷⁵ Laura Grünberg. From Gender Studies to Gender IN Studies. Case Studies on Gender-Inclusive Curriculum in Higher Education. CEPES, Bucharest, 2011. Available at: <http://www.celap.edu.rs/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/From-Gender-Studies-to-Gender-IN-Studies.pdf>

5.4 Discrimination in the Labor Market Indicators

Women of Albania and North Macedonia are characterized by a disadvantaged position in relation to the labor market. This is noted in the low numbers of women in such market compare to European numbers. This is due to several reasons, however, mostly related to various forms of discrimination at the workplace. Gender roles and stereotypes in family and in the society, together with lack of social care services (e.g., lack of child care facilities and lack of help in managing the household chores) make it difficult for women balancing private and professional life. Returning from pregnancy and maternity leave frequently leads to the termination of the contract, thus contributing to women's unemployment. Furthermore, data indicates women are more prone to have part-time jobs than man and the proportion of unpaid home work is very high in both countries. Still women are hold responsible for the house work, while still having a part- or full-time job outside the house, making it double their work. Moreover, the discriminatory, sexist language of job advertisements is identified as discouraging for women seeking employment⁷⁶.

Lastly, women in all Western Balkans, including Albania and Macedonia, even when employed are paid less than men, with the gender pay gap varying across the countries⁷⁷, even though up to now there are no clear specific data related to this issue.

5.5 Civil and Political Participation Indicators

One of the key indicators of gender equality in a society refers to the civil and political participation of women in decision-making, as it shows whether women are in the position or not to make or influence public decisions. The women got the right to vote, pretty early in both countries. Albania accessed the right to vote in 1920, whereas North Macedonia in 1946.

⁷⁶ GAP Institute. Labour Market Discrimination How job advertisements create gender inequality. GAP Institute, Prishtina, 2017.

http://www.institutigap.org/documents/20684_LABOUR%20MARKET%20DISCRIMINATION.pdf

⁷⁷ Avlijaš et al. (2013) Gender pay gap in the Western Balkans countries: Evidence from Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. <http://www.fren.org.rs/sites/default/files/Gender%20pay%20gap%20in%20the%20Western%20balkan%20countries.pdf>

Up to now there were only two women elected as head of State in North Macedonia, and no woman has made it in such a position in Albania.

Even though, there have been continuous efforts by both governments to increase women political participation, women in both countries still face numerous obstacles to actively participate in political social life.

Despite there has been introduced the system of gender quota in both countries, still, the real position of women and their chances for actual participation remains low, as within the male-dominated political parties, the man leaders will be those who will determine the composition of the party lists, thus setting women at the end of the lists or finding ways to cheat the system.

Indeed, both Albania and North Macedonia have adopted a quota system for their parliaments in order to enable women to enter the male-dominated field, up to 30% (Albania) and 40% (North Macedonia), still women status of participation remains extremely low. Change should start first within the political parties but neither North Macedonia, nor Albania has a legislation focused on introducing gender quota in political parties. Women's parliamentary networks have been created in both countries, to boost substantial political participation of women.

Similarly, the directors, COEs or senior managerial positions in public administrations are largely reserved for men. Lastly, even though it is difficult to directly compare the results from both countries, the available data nevertheless indicates largely existing inequality in the governmental administrations.

5.5 Access to Finance and Ownership Indicators

Even though both countries, Albania and North Macedonia have guaranteed equal rights to women and men, according to the Global Gender Index 2021, both countries score very low and perform not so good related to a number of issues related to finance and ownership. For example, ownership goes through a traditional masculine line and frequently women are left outside, even though according to law they have same rights as the men in the family. Women's access to land use, control and ownership together with inheritance rights for daughters is scored 0.25 in both countries, in a range of 0 to 1 (worst). Same scores result also with regard to women's access to non-land assets use, control and ownership. Not to mention, that the right to hold a bank account

or to ask for a credit still remains a male domain in both Albania and North Macedonia. Of course, there are expectations, which do not represent the whole situation in the country.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Research Question 4. What are the key results and lessons learned for possible future replication?

As noted from the aforementioned sections, the main challenges faced by both Albania and North Macedonia towards setting solid gender machineries are different, yet the most important factor is related to lack of political will and commitment, which then leads to poor allocation of financial and human resources funds.

Usually, the state and structure of national gender machineries together with the political will is a reflection of an overall prevailing culture of gender stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes, and poor understanding of gender equality. Add to lack of disaggregated data, unclear government priorities, structural and communication problems within and among state agencies, weak civil society and many more. To some degree the aforementioned problems characterize both countries.

In addition, both Albania and North Macedonia face problems related to irregular reporting, lack of policy coordination and monitoring structures. Yet there are good examples, such as the Albania case, where the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth performed regular reporting against the previous strategic document (period 2011–2015) and performed an evaluation of the document, the results of which directly fed into the drafting process of the new strategy and action plan for the period 2016–2020⁷⁸.

It is very important to clarify that these good practices usually occur only when having strong external technical support, as usually governmental departments/divisions lack sufficient capacities to systematically collect and analyze such data.

As a consequence, current governments of Albania and North Macedonia still face lots of problems when performing systematic policy monitoring, reporting, and periodic evaluations.

⁷⁸ UN Women & UNDP (2016). Gender Brief Albania 2016. Prepared by Monika Kocaqi, Ani Plaku and Dolly Wittberger. UN Women, Albania. P. 14.

When the governments are lacking certain services, it is usually the CSOs who often fill in the gap by providing their own data, monitoring and reporting on international recommendations, target to be met and policy implementation.

Up to now, both in Albania and North Macedonia, due to the scarcity of governmental policy monitoring practices, several data from CSOs have been used as an alternative information available form of monitoring.

Yet, a key prerequisite for successful monitoring (as well as periodic evaluations) is the data and the reports provided by the governments. Therefore, a lot of work is ahead of the governments of Albania and North Macedonia in terms of unifying reporting data.

The main aim of this research was conducting a “Comparative analyses of gender equality machineries in the Republic of Albania and in North Macedonia and their impact on gender mainstreaming in government policies and budgets.”

As the research shows both countries have a lot of similarities on how the structure of the GM is constructed. Both Departments for Gender Equality are placed under one ministry, in Albania under the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, while in North Macedonia under the Ministry of Labor and Social policy. In Albania the Department of Gender Equality is a branch of the Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, who is run under the lead of General Directory of Policies and Development of Health and Social Protection.

Whereas, in North Macedonia the Department for Equal Opportunities is part of the Unit for Prevention and Protection against any kind of Discrimination.

In both countries, according to the Gender Equality Law, there should be a Gender Equality employee/civil servant in each line ministries. Despite few cases, in both countries gender equality employees do not exist as established positions but rather as an add on of another full-time position which is asked to deliver on the following beside their actual TOR: Gender Equality Coordinator, coordinates the activities of the Ministry for incorporating gender perspective in all policies and programs within respective Ministry and cooperates with the

Ministry of Labor and Social Policy⁷⁹. This is one of the reasons for the lack of systemized integration of gender equality in policies and laws at national level in both countries.

When it comes to the highest body on gender equality and gender mainstreaming both countries have National Council of Gender Equality (NCGE). Different from North Macedonia the NCGE in Albania meets regularly and inform the Minister in charge regarding gender equality situation in the country. Different from Albania the Parliament of North Macedonia has a separate Commission for equal opportunities for women and man while in Albania while in Albania there is a Sub-Commission on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women as part of the Parliamentary Commission on Labor, Social Issues and Health which has a limited mandate and less impact on gender equality.

Both Albania and North Macedonia do not have a Commissioner for Gender Equality. However, it the Commissioner for Protection Against Discrimination, the one who covers among others also the gender-based discrimination cases.

The situation is not much different at local level in both countries. In Albania the Municipal Gender Equality Officers (GEO) are appointed and in some LG covering the functions of Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence (LCDV) only in rare cases they have full time positions while in North Macedonia Equal opportunity coordinators are supported in their work by well-established Commission for equal opportunities. In both countries the GEO are weak, without political and administrative power and in many cases, they have other tasks as per their official TORs to deliver.

In order for both gender machineries to be able to deliver on what the international and national commitment on gender equality requires them to achieve in all policy areas the following are very important:

⁷⁹ https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/Sektor_z_Ednakvi_moznosti_ENG%5B1%5D.pdf

- a. First and foremost, both countries must implement all legal obligations on the structures of the Gender Mechanisms in order that all *de jure* achievements to be translated in *de facto*.
- b. Countries have to officially establish positions of gender equality employees at national and local level, do proper calculations and include the cost in the government budget.
- c. As both governments of Albania and North Macedonia signed Beijing Platform on 1992, where they took personal responsibility on placing gender national mechanisms at the highest possible level of government; they should keep continuing investing on them with resources needed to fulfil their mandates.⁸⁰
- d. Since gender equality represents a fundamental human right and an important value for every democracy, the gender mainstreaming should be a core element of every policy and budgetary process in both Albania and North Macedonia despite the responsibilities of gender mechanisms.
- e. Gender Equality should be part of every public official regardless of their role and responsibility. It needs to be part of their TOR and their performance.
- f. Gender Equality employees must have the authority and political support inside the institutions (at local and national level) to perform their duties as per their tasks and responsibilities.

⁸⁰ Commission on the Status of Women. Report on the Forty-third Session, 1999, 1-12 March and 1 April (E/CN.6/1999/10):18. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw99.pdf>

- g. The work of gender machinery should be backed up with adequate human, technical and financial resources at both the central and municipal level as per **UN CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations**⁸¹.
- h. **Increase understanding of international conventions** to the protection of fundamental rights, as well as obligations that arise from international legal instruments including gender equality international commitments is critical. Additionally, these should be part of training curricula of all public administration.
- i. The government should make sure that National gender strategies are developed in a participatory manner and reflect the main gender inequalities in each country. They need to be costed and fully reflected in the government budget.
- j. Although both countries have done important steps on institutionalisation of gender budgeting still implementation is lacking.
- k. Use of sex disaggregated data and evidence based policy analyses should be mandatory as part of the work of gender equality employees.
- l. Gender mainstreaming with clear key performance indicators must be included in all sectoral strategies and budget documents for planning and monitoring processes.
- m. Gender Mechanisms should be given the power to scrutinize policies and budgets of the sectoral policies and have the power to approve it or not based on predefined gender quality standards.

⁸¹ CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/4 paras 14 & 15.

- n. Gender Machineries should have the power to assess government decisions and bills before they are approved by the cabinet.

As final remarks, despite the progresses made in terms of establishing solid national gender machineries, promoting women rights and gender equality still there is a long way for Albania and North Macedonia in achieving equality society goals.

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