

REGIONAL PARALLEL
PERFORMANCE AUDIT
**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOAL 5 -
ACHIEVING
GENDER EQUALITY**

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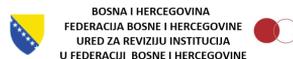
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REGIONAL PARALLEL PERFORMANCE AUDIT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 - ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

Regional parallel performance audit in the field of gender equality implemented by the State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia, State Audit Institution of Montenegro, Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Audit Office of the Institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Supreme Audit Office of the Republika Srpska Public Sector



CONTENTS

PARALLEL AUDIT FRAMEWORK	01
INTRODUCTION	02
LESSONS LEARNED	03
State Audit Institution of Republic of Serbia	04
<hr/>	
Word of President and Auditor General	04
Introduction	05
Review of the Current Status of Gender Equality	06
Audit Goal and Audit Questions	06
Scope and Methodology	06
Findings and Conclusions	07
Recommendations	09
Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina	10
<hr/>	
Word of Auditor General	10
Introduction	11
Review of the Current Status of Gender Equality	11
Audit Goal and Audit Questions	11
Scope and Methodology	12
Findings and Conclusions	13
Recommendations	15
Audit Office of the Institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	16
<hr/>	
Word of Auditor General	16
Introduction	16
Review of the Current Status of Gender Equality	17
Audit Goal and Audit Questions	18
Scope and Methodology	18
Findings and Conclusions	18
Recommendations	19
Supreme Audit Office of the Republica Srpska Public Sector	21
<hr/>	
Word of Auditor General	21
Introduction	22
Scope and Methodology	23
Findings and Conclusions	23
Recommendations	27
Montenegro State Audit Institution	29
<hr/>	
Word of the Chairman of the Senate, member of the Senate	29
Introduction	30
Findings and Conclusions	31
Recommendations	32

Parallel Audit Framework

Regional parallel performance audit in the field of gender equality was implemented by the State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia, State Audit Institution of Montenegro, Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Audit Office of the Institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Supreme Audit Office of the Republika Srpska Public Sector.

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) provided technical and financial support for the parallel audit through the regional project "Transformative Financing for Gender Equality: Towards More Transparent, Inclusive, and Accountable Governance in the Western Balkans" ensuring the highest possible level of independence of each Supreme Audit Institution (SAI). The need for full and equal participation and leadership of women in all areas of sustainable development is affirmed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda across all its components. For this very reason, UN Women has extended its technical and expert assistance in facilitating SAIs meetings, ensuring that audit efforts are specifically focused on assessing the progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which pertains to gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

In early 2023, the SAIs concluded an agreement to conduct a parallel performance audit based on the legislation governing the organisation and functioning of the signatories to the Agreement and International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) professional pronouncements, with the content and structure of the Agreement aligned with INTOSAI GUID 9000.

The parallel audit was carried out in accordance with INTOSAI professional pronouncements typical of performance auditing and recognized as relevant standards for public sector audits. The audit was carried out by individual institutions in line with the Agreement and the Framework plan for conducting parallel audits in the period from January to December 2023.

This document is a compilation of summaries of individual audit reports published by the SAIs, with contributions from UN Women. Full audit reports and accompanying materials from each SAI can be accessed via links provided after each summary.

Introduction

In the pursuit of advancing gender-responsive governance and budgeting, and fostering women's participation, UN Women has played a pivotal role in supporting the Regional Parallel Performance Audit of SDG 5 in the Western Balkans. This collaborative effort, led by the Audit Institutions of the Republic of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska stands as a testament to the collective commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 – the goal dedicated to realizing gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

As the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, our engagement in this regional project extends beyond mere technical and financial support. It reflects our dedication to promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development, recognizing the indispensable role of women in shaping resilient and inclusive societies. Through a lens of gender-responsive governance and budgeting, we strive not only to address immediate challenges but also to build a foundation for long-term, sustainable change.

SAIs with their mandate are uniquely positioned to scrutinize government expenditures through a gender lens and ensure accountability and transparency in public finances. By conducting audits that assess the gender responsiveness of budgetary allocations and policy implementation, SAIs contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as well as influence significantly in shaping policies and practices that impact gender equality outcomes.

Our intervention in the Regional Parallel Performance Audit aligns seamlessly with UN Women three-pronged mandate: to support intergovernmental bodies, facilitate coordination and coherence, and enhance the effectiveness of the UN system in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. By providing technical expertise and financial resources, we ensure the autonomy and integrity of each SAI involved, fostering an environment conducive to impartial assessments.

The imperative for gender equality and the empowerment of women is not only a standalone goal but an integral thread woven into the fabric of all sustainable development efforts. This audit process serves as a critical tool in evaluating progress, identifying gaps, and catalysing action towards a more equitable and inclusive future.

This collaboration embodies the essence of UN Women commitment to leaving no one behind and realizing a world where the rights and potential of every woman and girl are fully recognized. As we navigate the intricacies of this regional audit, we remain steadfast in our dedication to advancing gender equality and contributing to a future where every individual can thrive, irrespective of gender.

Lessons Learned

The insights and findings of the parallel audit offer valuable lessons that can guide future efforts and facilitate achievement of gender equality and sustainable development goals. Below are the most important lessons learned:

- 1. Coordinated regional approach enhances visibility:** Collective effort of SAIs across the three countries highlighted the importance of gender equality at a regional level. Coordinated work among five institutions raised the awareness about the need for action and enhancement of gender equality within the region.
- 2. Improvement of knowledge and competencies:** Through this audit, the auditors have affirmed their existing understanding of the 2030 Agenda, gender equality, and gender-responsive budgeting, and have also gained new knowledge and skills. The newfound knowledge will enhance their abilities to tackle complex gender equality issues in forthcoming audits.
- 3. Strengthening institutional capacities:** SAIs have further developed and strengthened their audit capabilities through this review. This lays the foundation for future audits focusing on gender equality, sustainable development goals, and parallel performance audits.
- 4. Diversity of participants enhances analyses:** Diversity of participants in the parallel audit brought forth various perspectives, experiences, and competencies, resulting in more robust and comprehensive analyses. Knowledge exchange during the process contributed to better outcomes.
- 5. Regional cooperation in the performance of audits brings benefits:** The parallel audit project confirmed the significant benefits of cooperation among SAIs. The exchange of information and practices facilitates determination of audit criteria and findings, contributing to the auditors' professional development.
- 6. Having clear indicators is crucial:** The audit highlighted the necessity of clear indicators for implementing the sustainable development sub-goals, especially in the local context. Defining measurable values by 2030 is crucial for the successful implementation of audits.
- 7. Cooperation as an opportunity for societal change:** This collaborative framework between SAIs presents an opportunity for joint work towards meaningful social changes in the countries and broader region, particularly in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

These lessons provide invaluable insights that will inform the planning and execution of future audits, contributing to the long-term goal of achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia

WORD OF THE PRESIDENT AND AUDITOR GENERAL

Through the implementation of audits on this and similar topics, the State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia wants to ensure that its role as an institution remains constantly relevant and beneficial for the society. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals helps us fulfil that mission. We are committed to meeting the needs of our citizens and delivering added value through independent external oversight of the achievement of goals agreed upon at the national level, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This audit stands as a collective success, highlighting importance of adept and competent auditors who are well-versed in conducting audits across a myriad of diverse and intricate domains.

Gender equality policies should be an integral component of the regular activities of all governmental bodies and institutions at all levels. This will establish gender equality as an essential principle in regular planning of public policies and their budgeting.

Gender equality is fundamental to the development of our society, and all citizens should have equal opportunities to realize their full potential. Their behaviours, abilities, and needs should be equally valued in society, and gender and sex-based discrimination should be eradicated.

Inclusion, empowerment, and equality lie at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality stands as one of its sustainable development goals and intersects with all other goals, playing a vital role across all aspects of sustainable development.

In order to contribute to sustainable development and truly make a difference in the lives of all citizens, supreme audit institutions must prioritize gender equality and inclusion within their organizations and operations. In this context, I consider these audits as proof of our commitment to even greater efforts towards achieving gender equality. I am convinced that the implementation of our recommendations from the audits will foster a more equitable and inclusive society.

Creating a society where all citizens can fully exercise their rights requires a multisectoral approach and participation of all relevant stakeholders, from governmental institutions to civil society organizations, experts, and key international partners.

- *Dr. Duško Pejović*

INTRODUCTION

The State Audit Institution conducted a performance audit titled "Establishment of Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the Republic of Serbia" in the period from May to November 2023. The performance audit was conducted in accordance with the Law on the State Audit Institution¹, the Rules of Procedure of the State Audit Institution², and the Audit Program of the State Audit Institution for 2023.

The audit was carried out in compliance with the procedures outlined in the framework of audit standards established by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), the Code of Ethics for Government Auditors, and the principles of the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAI).

Through the implementation of audits on this and similar topics, the State Audit Institution of the Republic of Serbia wants to ensure that its role as an institution remains constantly relevant and beneficial for the society. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals helps us fulfil that mission. We are committed to meeting the needs of our citizens and delivering added value through independent external oversight of the achievement of goals agreed upon at the national level, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 5 "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls".

According to the assessment of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs from 2021, the Republic of Serbia was among the seven highest rated countries in Europe in terms of the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting.

AUDIT TEAM

- ▶ **Nikola Stefanović**
Authorized State Auditor and Team Leader
- ▶ **Marina Arsenović**
Audit Advisor and Team Member

¹Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", no. 101/05, 54/07, 36/10 and 44/18.

²Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia ", number 9/09.

REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF GENDER EQUALITY

In the Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2030, it is stated that although positive steps have been made in the previous period on advancing gender equality, the initiated processes need to be intensified by mainstreaming gender in all public policies and the budget. There is no adequate knowledge or procedures to identify the gender gap within the budget user competences, or gender-responsive planning, which is reflected in the development of priorities for financing, and later on the budget. To provide adequate support to introducing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), GRB needs to be integrated in all the phases of the budget process, which also includes the preparation of priority funding areas. Information on the implementation at the local level is incomplete, showing that the implementation at the local level started much later. Therefore, a number of LSGUs have started GRB implementation, but a considerable number still does not implement GRB. Also, LSGUs do not have sufficient capacities for gender-responsive planning and budgeting.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The following documents were analysed in order to answer the audit questions: Budget System Law, Gender Equality Law, Rulebook on keeping records and reporting on gender equality implementation, Plans for introduction of gender-responsive budgeting into the process of budget preparation and adoption in the Republic of Serbia, Plans for gradual introduction of gender-responsive budgeting for budget users in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Guidelines for implementing gender-responsive budgeting, Guidelines for developing program budgets, Guidelines for monitoring and reporting on program performance, the Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021-2030, the Action Plan for 2022 and 2023 for the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021-2030, the Annual Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for 2022, Reports on the impact of gender-responsive budgeting in the Republic of Serbia in 2021 and 2022, the Progress report on the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting into the public finance planning system in the Republic of Serbia in 2021 and 2022, and Reports on the performance of gender-responsive budgeting in local self-governments submitted via questionnaires.

AUDIT GOAL AND AUDIT QUESTIONS

The goal of the audit was to assess the extent to which responsible authorities have efficiently implemented gender-responsive budgeting by incorporating gender equality principles in the budgetary process.

Accordingly, the audit questions were as follows:

1. Does the legislative and planning framework contribute to the effective implementation of gender-responsive budgeting?
2. Have budget users involved in the process of gender-responsive budgeting conducted a gender analysis of the budget and restructured revenues and expenditures to enhance gender equality?

The data on the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting provided by direct budget users of the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, including 145 local self-government units and 25 town municipalities, was used as source of information. In the budget for 2021, 47 direct budget users implemented gender-responsive budgeting through 69 programs, 75 program activities, and 22 projects, with 139 gender-responsive budgeting objectives and 252 gender-sensitive indicators. Furthermore, all 26 budget users in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina implemented gender-responsive budgeting through 39 programs, 64 program activities, and 11 projects, with 149 objectives and 293 gender-sensitive indicators.

Having analysed performance reports on gender-responsive budgeting at the local level, we established that 34 local self-government units (23% of total number) provided performance reports according to which gender-responsive budgeting was implemented through 227 gender-responsive objectives and 334 indicators.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Finding 1.1: Mechanisms for implementing the Gender Equality Strategy have not been established.

The Action Plan for 2022 and 2023 for the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021-2030 is a public policy document designed to operationalize and achieve the goal and specific objectives outlined in the Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021-2030. The Action Plan foresees the achievement of the Strategy goal through four specific objectives to be implemented through measures and activities defined under the framework of measures for 2022 and 2023. The Action Plan links each activity with the budget of the Republic of Serbia, specifying the section, program, function, program activity, and account group under which the activity should be implemented.

The total number of activities to be implemented in 2022 was 55. Out of that number, 24 activities were completed (43.64%), 10 activities are currently ongoing, and 21 activities were not implemented. The total planned funds for the implementation of activities in 2022 and 2023 amounted to 93,894,000 dinars. The total approved and spent funds from the budget for the implementation of the planned activities in 2022 amounted to 18,500,000 dinars.

According to the explanation of the responsible person from the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, a particular challenge encountered during the drafting of the Action Plan was the refusal of certain bodies to take ownership of measures, despite these measures falling within their specific jurisdiction in line with the Law on Ministries. During the process of soliciting opinions on the Draft Strategy or Action Plan, certain bodies agreed to be in charge of specific measures. However, during the implementation phase, they did not carry out any planning or coordinating activities within their jurisdiction, nor did they work with their partners or report to the Ministry as the authority responsible for implementing the specific policy document.

The activity budgeted within the Action Plan is either not recognized within the program budget or its objectives do not align with the presented program/program activity in the budget of the body responsible for the measure or activity. Consequently, financial data/funds were not provided at the time of reporting on the implementation.

It would be necessary to raise awareness of the responsible authorities and improve their capacities for the implementation of measures and activities within their jurisdiction, and for reporting on those measures. This is important considering that it has implications for assessing the performance of the Republic of Serbia in the field of human rights within the EU accession process, as well as in measuring the Global Gender Equality Index and the EU Gender Equality Index.

Finding 2.1: Budget users involved in gender-responsive budgeting have established several explicitly linked gender-responsive objectives and indicators.

Gender-responsive budgeting involves integration of gender equality principles into the budgetary process, which requires a comprehensive gender analysis of budget allocations and restructuring of revenues and expenditures to advance gender equality objectives. In its instruction, the Ministry of Finance obliges budget users to take into account the current organizational and functional structure of their organisation, and their responsibilities outlined in the Law on Ministries, when planning the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting. Budget users are further obliged to align their program objectives and planned priorities related to gender equality with identified priorities in the Gender Equality Strategy and the accompanying action plan, as well as with other available and relevant gender analyses and studies. In instances where pertinent data regarding the sources, causes, consequences, and extent of gender inequality within the purview of the budget user are not readily available, it would be necessary to plan for a gender analysis.

In 2021, 47 direct budget users of the Republic of Serbia (31% of direct budget users), and all direct budget users of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, as well as 34 local self-governments (23%) implemented gender-responsive budgeting.

In the ongoing effort to integrate gender-responsive budgeting into the fiscal process, some budget users in the Republic of Serbia, specifically those delineating solely administrative costs and employee salaries, remain excluded. These bodies lack jurisdiction over issues directly impacting citizens in Serbia and they do not provide any services or goods to the public (e.g., cabinets, administrative districts, etc.).

Analysis of gender-responsive goals and indicators for all budget users has revealed the following:

- ▶ certain gender-responsive goals and indicators pertain to the budget user's scope of work;
- ▶ certain gender-responsive goals and indicators pertain to the preparation of gender analysis;
- ▶ certain gender-responsive goals and indicators pertain to the gender mainstreaming of the objectives and indicators within the program structure.

The process of gender mainstreaming or integrating gender perspective into objectives and indicators within the program structure, has not been fully completed.

Based on the evidence collected and analysed during the audit, the following conclusions have been reached:

▶ CONCLUSION 1

Effective framework for gender mainstreaming of the budgetary process has not been fully established in the Republic of Serbia.

▶ CONCLUSION 2

Gender equality principle has not been effectively implemented in the budgetary process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SAI has issued the following recommendations to the Ministry of Finance:

- ▶ The Instruction for preparing the program budget should clearly specify which program activities/projects do not require determination of gender-responsive objectives and indicators.
- ▶ The concept of sectoral gender analysis should be more precisely defined in the Plan for gradual introduction of gender-responsive budgeting and the Instruction for the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting.
- ▶ The Ministry should define cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) regarding the preparation and publication of reports on the impact of gender-responsive budgeting in the Republic of Serbia (using the ministry's logo, data submission, writing comments, assessing the level of implementation, etc.).

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue should ensure when formulating the Action Plan that the assessment of funds required for the implementation of each measure is carried out and that the sources from which these funds will be secured are identified, including the program activity or project in the program budget from which funds will be allocated for the assessment or donor projects not covered by the program budget.

FULL REPORT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE AVAILABLE HERE



Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina

WORD OF AUDITOR GENERAL

We are proud to have been part of the project of the first regional parallel performance audit pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 and delighted that the project has been successfully concluded through collaborative effort with our regional colleagues and with the professional and financial support of UN Women. Five quality reports on the performance audits aimed at advancing gender equality in three countries have been presented to the public and delivered to relevant institutions for further action.

The initiative to produce this publication, which summarizes our collective effort, is a recognition of the importance of the role and work of SAIs in promoting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the goal related to gender equality.

The determination of the Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals became evident for the first time in 2019 when we released a performance audit report focusing on the preparedness of Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. With this report, we took the lead in the region by evaluating the prerequisites for the achievement of SDGs and urging relevant institutions to establish a strategic and institutional framework for this objective.

With the completion of audit on SDG 5, we remain steadfast in our strategic commitment to being acknowledged as a major contributor to enhanced oversight and accountability in line with the obligations stemming from the 2030 Agenda.

I am confident that the outcomes of this parallel regional audit will be used to further inform strategic and operational decision-making processes in the region and bring about positive changes in the field of gender equality.

- *Hrvoje Tvrtković*

INTRODUCTION

The Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted a performance audit titled "Activities of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Ensuring Gender Equality". The goal of the audit was to examine if the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are efficient and effective in undertaking activities that ensure gender equality. The audit was motivated by the country's slow progress in advancing gender equality over the past decades and insufficient strategic effort to ensure gender equality. According to the UN Human Development Index - HDI, Bosnia and Herzegovina is classified in group four as a country with a medium-low level of equality between men and women. The aim is for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be in the first group by 2030 (according to the Framework for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Bosnia and Herzegovina), alongside neighbouring countries, and to achieve high level of equality between men and women.

The audit was initiated in January 2023 and concluded with the publication of the audit report in December 2023.

AUDIT TEAM

- ▶ **Dr. sc. Eldina Pleho**
Senior Performance Auditor, Team Leader
- ▶ **Milan Milović**
Semi-Senior Performance Auditor, Team Member

REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF GENDER EQUALITY

Some of the basic preconditions for ensuring gender equality have not been fully established. This primarily pertains to the non-adoption or delayed adoption of strategic and operational documents concerning gender equality, ineffective establishment of mechanisms to monitor implementation of commitments, and ineffective process of adoption of reports on the implementation of commitments.

It also pertains to the inadequate recognition of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5, in the planning documents and reports on the operations of the ministries, the absence of legally prescribed action programs encompassing analysis of the status of gender equality, and measures to rectify identified shortcomings. The gathering and sorting of gender-disaggregated data falling within the jurisdiction of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina has not been fully ensured.

Gender-sensitive budgeting is still in the early stage of development, even though 12 years have passed since the institutions of BiH planned to establish and apply gender-sensitive budgeting. This is primarily reflected in the absence of gender-sensitive programs in the framework budget documents and gender-sensitive implementation indicators, as well as insufficiently clear instructions regarding their implementation, lack of systematic approach in this area, and insufficient attendance at trainings on these topics.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The audit team has reviewed the laws regulating gender equality, including the by-laws, regulations, and internal documents of the auditee, as well as other relevant documents pertaining to the goal and subject matter of the audit, which are: The Law on Gender Equality, related strategies and action documents, focusing particularly on the Gender Action Plan for 2018-2022, the Framework for Sustainable Development Goals, UNSCR 1325 "Women, Peace, and Security," related decisions and rulebooks and reports on the implementation of commitments under the mentioned action documents and plans and commitments arising from the reform strategic documents, and other similar documents.

Audit's primary methods: Desk review, interviews with representatives of the BiH institutions, assessment of the current situation in the field and institutions' feedback collected through questionnaires.

The audit team has analysed available mid-term work programs, the work programs and reports for 2020, 2021 and 2022, the reports on the execution of budget and the documents of the framework budget of the ministries in the Council of Ministers of BiH for 2021-2023 or 2022-2024. The analysis included more than 70 documents of the ministries.

Data was also collected via questionnaires sent to 73 BiH institutions and compared to the data from the documents of sampled institutions and other sources.

AUDIT GOAL AND AUDIT QUESTIONS

The goal of the audit was to examine if the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina are efficient and effective in undertaking activities that ensure gender equality.

General audit question:

Are institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina efficient and effective in undertaking activities that ensure gender equality?

Audit sub-questions:

1. Is there timely planning, monitoring, and reporting on activities of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions aimed at ensuring gender equality?
2. Are the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina integrating gender issues into their planning documents, do they conduct gender analyses and maintain relevant statistics?
3. Has the gender sensitive budget system been established within the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Relevant participants in the process and representatives of seven responsible institutions (Ministry of Finance and Treasury of BiH, Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, Gender Equality Agency, Ministry of Defence of BiH, Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH, Ministry of Security of BiH and BiH Directorate for Economic Planning) were interviewed in semi-structured interviews.

To gain an objective understanding of the issues, the audit team has also relied on online sources, as well as professional and academic studies, experiences from other countries, study visits, and other relevant information regarding gender equality.

The audit team held regular consultations during the audit with the gender equality experts from UN Women. The audit teams have exchanged experiences, practices, and knowledge on gender equality through regional meetings with colleagues from other audit institutions participating in the parallel audit project.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Sustainable Development Goals Framework was adopted by the Council of Ministers in April 2021 as a joint document of governments at all levels defining broader development directions through which the governments at all levels and the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina strive to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. It serves as a crucial guiding document for strategic planning processes and budgeting at all government levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 7 November 2013, Bosnia and Herzegovina became the 6th member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**. By ratifying this convention, Bosnia and Herzegovina committed to taking legislative and other measures to ensure a legal, institutional, and organizational framework for preventing violence against women, protecting survivors of violence, and punishing perpetrators of violence.

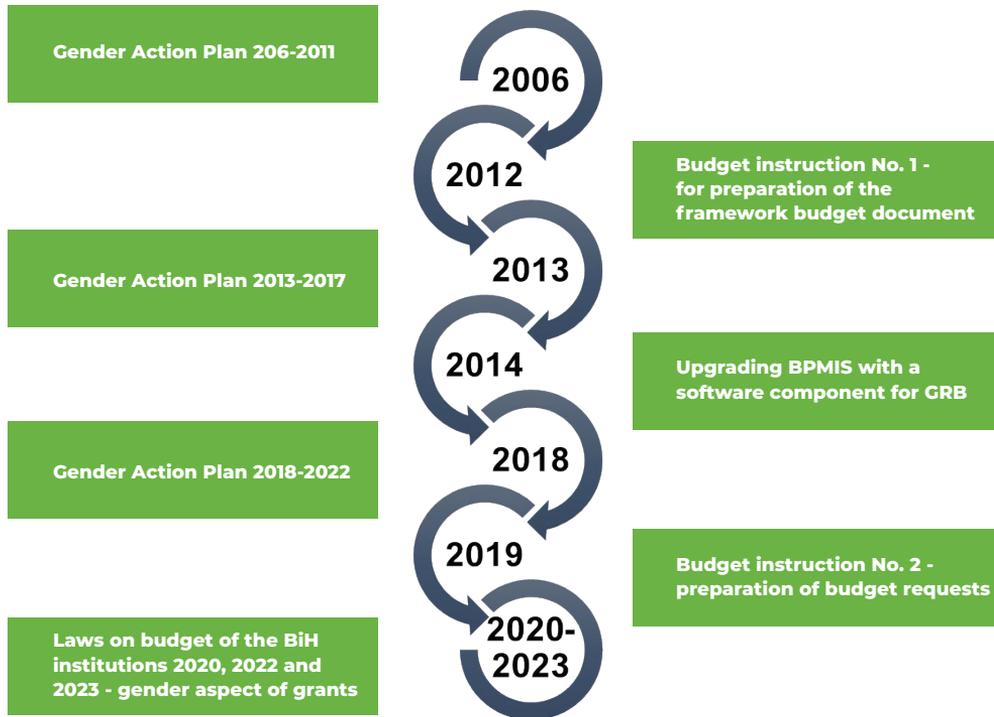
The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is an integral part of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is directly applicable, taking precedence over domestic laws.

The Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina was enacted in 2003 with the aim of regulating, promoting, and protecting gender equality, ensuring equal opportunities and treatment for all individuals regardless of gender, in both public and private domains, and governing protection from gender-based discrimination.

The Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an important and mandatory strategic document foreseen under the Law on Gender Equality. It represents a strategy for defining program goals aimed at achieving gender equality in all areas of social life and work, in both public and private domains. It is enacted every four years.

The following is a chronological overview of the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Figure 1: Chronological overview of introduction of gender-responsive budgeting



Source: Audit Office of the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Progress has been made in the most recent laws on the budget of BiH institutions (as of 2020) whereby gender perspective became more prominent. Namely, institutions implementing grants are now required to oblige users to consider the gender aspect in fund distribution and reporting.

Despite the fact that numerous international and domestic reports describe the society in Bosnia and Herzegovina as one characterized by gender inequality, the Council of Ministers has not given due attention to gender equality in its actions. Given the manner in which plans and action documents were adopted in this area, including the mechanisms to monitor realization of commitments and report on implemented activities, there is apparent inefficiency and ineffectiveness, suggesting inadequate commitment by the Council of Ministers to ensure gender equality.

Thus far, the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina did not conduct gender analyses within their respective areas of competence, even though it has been their legal obligation for a number of years. BiH institutions do not maintain the necessary gender-disaggregated statistics, which are essential for

situation analyses and implementation of corrective measures. If institutions do not maintain necessary statistics or conduct analyses on gender equality, they will not be aware of the existence of gender inequalities.

Introduction of gender-responsive budgeting in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a slow process that still does not yield expected results. Gender-responsive budgeting, aimed at allocating budgetary resources according to the different needs of women and men, has remained an unfulfilled obligation of BiH institutions for a decade.

All of the above has contributed to the lack of basic prerequisites for achievement of gender equality within the remit of the BiH institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure prerequisites for implementation of activities of the BiH institutions aimed at ensuring gender equality, the Audit Office has recommended the following:

To the Council of Ministers of BiH:

- ▶▶ To timely adopt all strategic and operational documents defining activities aimed at ensuring gender equality within the jurisdiction of BiH institutions.
- ▶▶ To timely issue decisions regarding the establishment of mechanisms to monitor implementation of adopted strategic and operational documents, and to timely adopt reports on implemented activities.

To BiH institutions:

- ▶▶ To comply with their legal obligation to conduct gender analyses or situation analyses in the field.
- ▶▶ To comply with their legal obligation to maintain gender-disaggregated statistics within their jurisdiction.
- ▶▶ To integrate gender issues into their strategic and operational documents and to conduct analyses of all programs within the framework budget documents with an aim of establishing their gender potential.

To the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina allocating grants within their scope of work:

- ▶▶ To integrate gender into the entire grant management process.

To the Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- ▶▶ To introduce a strategic approach to the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

FULL REPORT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE AVAILABLE HERE

Audit Office of the Institutions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

WORD OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

Gender equality is essential for fostering a fair and sustainable society. Eliminating all forms of inequality between women and men represents the initial stride toward creating a society of equal opportunities.

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, achieving gender equality can yield significant added value, manifesting in the advancement of women's societal status and eliminating violence against them. The audit seeks to prompt relevant institutions and the wider public to accord appropriate attention to gender equality and protection against violence.

In accordance with the audit's findings and recommendations, the Audit Office deems it crucial for legislative and executive bodies of the Federation of BiH and the cantons, alongside other relevant institutions, to undertake all available measures to adequately implement the recommendations outlined in the "Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women" Report and address identified deficiencies.

"Gender equality is not only important for women, it is important for all humanity because it affects us all." - Ban Ki-moon

- *Dževad Nekić, MSc. Econ.*

INTRODUCTION

Audit of the public sector conducted by SAIs is an important factor in initiating changes in citizens' lives. It promotes mechanisms of accountability, which, in turn, lead to better decision-making by executive and legislative authorities.

One of the 14 priorities that Bosnia and Herzegovina must address to open accession negotiations with the European Union in the realm of rule of law involves enhancing the protection of the rights of all citizens, with a specific focus on enforcing laws pertaining to non-discrimination and gender equality. The significance of audit institutions in achieving gender equality is reflected in directing recommendations for improvements in this area, as well as in conducting assessments of whether gender equality is effectively and efficiently integrated into the policies and programs of public entities. With the intention of making an appropriate contribution to the implementation of UN SDG 5³, the Audit Office conducted a performance audit of "Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women".

³Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Pursuant to the Law on Gender Equality in BiH⁴, equality requires that the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women or men are not dependent on whether they are born as male or female individuals. Achieving gender equality is a key precondition for progress and the creation of a society of equal opportunities. Preventing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality are of essential importance for achieving sustainable development more quickly.

The available data suggest that there has been insufficient focus on addressing gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading to a gender imbalance across all levels of government. This imbalance is characterized by unequal representation of women and men in leadership roles. Discrimination and gender inequality give rise to a multitude of social issues, with gender-based violence being one of the most significant. This encompasses a spectrum of physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, along with threats of violence.

Nearly half of women in BiH (48%) have experienced some form of violence, whether from an intimate partner, non-partner, stalking, or sexual harassment, starting from the age of fifteen.⁵

AUDIT TEAM

- ▶ **Amela Balić**
Team Leader
- ▶ **Negra Alijagić Selimbegović**
Team Member

OVERSIGHT AND EXPERT SUPPORT

- ▶ **Aida Dozić**
Head of Performance Audit Sector
- ▶ **Mia Buljubašić**
Head of Development,
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SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The Audit covered the activities of 33 institutions: Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH, Federation Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, eleven gender equality commissions/boards in FBiH, ten cantonal ministries responsible for social policy and social work centres from ten cantons: Bihać, Orašje, Tuzla, Zenica, Goražde, Travnik, Mostar, Ljubuški, Sarajevo and Livno. Federation Ministry of Finance and two non-governmental organisations responsible for the work of safe houses were also asked for relevant data. The Audit covered the period between 2019 and 2022, and the data available for 2023.

⁴ Official Gazette of BiH, 32/10.

⁵ 2019 OSCE-led survey on violence against women - Well-being and Safety of Women - Bosnia and Herzegovina Results Report.

Primary data sources were questionnaires and interviews with auditees, and laws and bylaws. 27 questionnaires in total were disseminated to the auditees.⁶ Respondents were required to enclose documents corroborating their answers with the questionnaire. Structured interviews were conducted with representatives of nine institutions in FBiH, cantons and non-governmental organisations⁷ while a considerable number of conversations and email correspondences were held with other institutions for additional verification and alignment purposes.

Secondary data sources included information obtained through the analysis of reports, expert studies, statistical data, international publications, and other available information in the relevant field, as well as practices from other countries, allowing the audit to gain a broader perspective on activities aimed at achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women.

In the final phase of the main study, a focus group was organized, inviting all auditees and representatives of three non-governmental organizations. During the focus group meeting, preliminary audit findings were presented, providing an opportunity for auditees and other interested

AUDIT GOAL AND AUDIT QUESTIONS

The audit aimed to assess the effectiveness of relevant institutions in achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women.

In pursuit of this goal, the following aspects were examined:

1. Have appropriate regulatory and institutional prerequisites been established to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women?
2. Are appropriate strategic and planning documents drafted and efficiently implemented to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women?
3. Are appropriate measures taken to provide adequate care for women survivors of violence?

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The audit results highlight the insufficient efficiency of relevant institutions concerning gender equality and violence against women. This deficiency stems from an inadequate legislative framework and ineffective planning and implementation of measures to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. Additionally, the system of care for survivors of violence lacks proper organization.

Regulatory and institutional prerequisites

Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH are not fully compliant with the Istanbul Convention, despite Bosnia and Herzegovina's ratification of the convention a decade ago. Federation and cantonal commissions/boards for gender equality lacked consistent and suitable activities, with four cantonal commissions showing no activity whatsoever.

⁶ Ministries in charge of social affairs: Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of the Sarajevo Canton, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy of the Una-Sana Canton, Ministry of Health and Social Policy of the Posavina Canton, Ministry of Labour, Social Policy and Return of the Tuzla Canton, Ministry of Labour, Social Policy and Refugees of the Zenica-Doboj Canton, Ministry of Social Policy, Health, Displaced Persons and Refugees of the Bosnia-Podrinje Canton, Ministry of Health and Social Policy of the Central Bosnia Canton, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection of the West Herzegovina Canton, Ministry of Labour, Health, Social Protection and Refugees of the Canton 10. Cantonal gender equality commissions/boards: Una-Sana Canton, Posavina Canton, Central Bosnia Canton, Bosnia-Podrinje Canton, Sarajevo Canton, Tuzla Canton, Zenica-Doboj Canton, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, West Herzegovina Canton, and Canton 10. Social work centres from: Bihać, Orašje, Tuzla, Zenica, Goražde, Travnik, Mostar, Ljubuški and Livno.

⁷ Gender Centre of the Federation of BiH, Federation Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Federation Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees of the Sarajevo Canton, Social Work Centre of the City of Mostar, Cantonal Social Work Centre Sarajevo, Foundation for Local Democracy, Association „Medica“ Zenica and the Gender Equality Commission of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH.

Strategic and planning framework

Issues of gender equality and domestic violence are not adequately strategically addressed. In four cantons, gender action plans were not developed, while in two cantons, biennial programs of measures for the prevention of, protection against, and combating domestic violence were not developed or adopted. Furthermore, the development of biennial programs by cantons experienced significant delays, despite their obligation to consistently create these programs since 2013 as stipulated by the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence.

Assistance for survivors of violence

Between 2019 and 2022, within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, **there were a total of 10,294 domestic violence survivors, with women comprising 78%, or 8,038, of this total. However, due to the absence of records regarding gender-based violence outside familial contexts, the total number of women survivors of violence remains unknown.** According to the Federation Statistics Institute, between 2017 and 2021, 30 women were killed in FBiH.⁸ According to the data for the Federation of BiH, between September 2019 and November 2022, at least 14 women were killed by former or current partners or close relatives.⁹

Given **the inadequate staffing levels of social work centres with social workers and psychologists, these centres are unable to fully address the needs of violence survivors.** Moreover, they do not have the authority to file motions for protective measures. Mechanisms to assist survivors hesitant to report violence do not exist, even when social protection centres are aware of the problem. Children exposed to domestic violence are often overlooked as victims and are frequently excluded from protective measures.

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks the necessary accommodation capacities for survivors of violence, with some cantons failing to provide any accommodation at all.

In line with the Istanbul Convention standards, **there is a shortage of 96 beds for women survivors of violence in safe houses.** Due to the absence of regulations governing the establishment, operation, and funding of safe houses, **ministries of the Federation and the cantons responsible for social policy do not adequately and regularly supervise their activities.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the established findings and conclusions of the audit, **the Audit Office issued a total of 14 recommendations for 44 auditees.** The recommendations are aimed at:

- ▶ Enhancing regulatory and institutional prerequisites for achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women, primarily in terms of: more efficient alignment of the legislative framework with gender equality legislation; more effective operation of gender equality commissions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; alignment of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence and the Criminal Code of FBiH with the Istanbul Convention; and improving legislation in the field of social protection.

⁸ 2017 – four women, 2018 – six women, 2019 – nine women, 2020 – six women and 2021 – five women.

⁹ Gender Centre collected this data based on media research.

- ▶ Adequate drafting, implementation, and monitoring of the implementation of strategic and planning documents to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women.
- ▶ Appropriate follow-up and support for women survivors of violence, in particular in terms of establishing comprehensive records on survivors of violence; ensuring adequate staffing in social work centres; regular oversight of the operation of safe houses.

FULL REPORT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE AVAILABLE HERE

Supreme Audit Office of the Republika Srpska Public Sector

WORD OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The performance audit "Measures and Activities for Gender Equality of Institutions of Republika Srpska" was planned and conducted in accordance with the relevant legal framework of Republika Srpska and the highest professional standards as a regular planned activity of the Supreme Audit Office of the Republika Srpska Public Sector planned within the 2023 Annual Audit Plan.

This audit is a component of the regional Project of Parallel Performance Audits involving five supreme audit institutions from Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It received consulting assistance and support from UN Women in accordance with the Agreement on the Implementation of Parallel Performance Audits.

Parallel performance audit entails multiple audit institutions conducting audits on identical or similar subjects, employing comparable methodologies, and generating individual reports from each supreme audit institution.

The Project of Parallel Performance Audits enabled further enhancement of cooperation among supreme audit institutions in the region, exchange of audit practices, experiences, and ideas, more aligned and enhanced approach to auditing, and higher quality audit reports. It served the purpose of institutional strengthening of supreme audit institutions, especially performance auditing.

By conducting this performance audit, the Supreme Audit Office of the Republika Srpska Public Sector, as the supreme audit institution of Republika Srpska, contributes and provides additional value in promoting gender equality in society, more efficient and effective functioning of relevant institutions, and the affirmation and promotion of SDGs.

The widespread distribution of audit reports and the presentation of audit results have facilitated the exposure of relevant institutions and individuals tasked with implementing gender equality measures to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the audit. I believe that our audit report will facilitate the implementation of measures and activities aimed at enhancing and sustaining long-term gender equality in Republika Srpska.

We extend our gratitude to all auditees for their professional cooperation and commitment throughout the audit process. It has been a rewarding experience collaborating with colleagues from other supreme audit institutions, and we express our heartfelt appreciation to UN Women for their invaluable assistance and support in various forms.

- Jovo Radukić

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this performance audit are the measures and activities undertaken by the institutions of Republika Srpska to ensure and improve gender equality.

The audit encompassed examining the roles, jurisdictions and responsibilities of the Government of Republika Srpska and its institutions (ministries, republic administrations, republic administrative organisations, Gender Centre of Republika Srpska and public institutions in Republika Srpska) regarding the promotion and improvement of gender equality.

More detailed examinations regarding the provision of gender equality and the implementation of measures and activities for gender equality were conducted at the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, which serves as an institution supporting the introduction of gender equality in Republika Srpska. In addition to the Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska, the audit covered the following institutions: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Labour, War Veterans and Protection of Persons with Disability, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Scientific and Technological Development, Higher Education and Information Society, Agency for Public Administration of Republika Srpska, Agency for Payments in Agriculture, Employment Bureau of Republika Srpska, University of Banja Luka, and University of East Sarajevo.

This audit covered a period of five years, specifically from 2018 to 2022. The audit was conducted from May to December 2023, following preliminary study and audit planning.

AUDIT TEAM

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- ▶ **Milena Broćeta**
Junior Performance Auditor, Team Member
- ▶ **Zoran Pajčin**
Expert Advisor for Administrative Affairs, Team Member

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The approach in this audit is a combination of a results-oriented approach and a systems approach. The results-oriented approach centres on evaluating the results attained in the realm of gender equality, which have been achieved through resource allocation and the implementation of measures and initiatives by the Government of Republika Srpska and its institutions. The systemic approach focuses on assessing whether essential systemic prerequisites for gender equality have been established and how institutions, as integral components of the system, fulfil their roles and responsibilities concerning gender equality.

Throughout the audit process, necessary data and information were gathered through desk review including documents, registers and databases, gender-disaggregated data kept in relevant institutions, consultative meetings with representatives of other relevant institutions and organizations for gender equality in Republika Srpska, review of available documentation and data, case studies, review of the official websites of institutions in Republika Srpska, as well as examination of the official websites of institutions in neighbouring countries.

Substantial quantitative and qualitative data and information were additionally acquired through questionnaires distributed to 40 institutions. Furthermore, 16 meetings were convened with approximately 60 representatives from ministries, republic administrations, and public institutions, as well as a focus group meeting. In the process of data collection for this performance audit, more than 150 interviews were conducted with representatives of the audited institutions. Moreover, over 1200 documents were meticulously reviewed and analysed.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings, based on relevant, reliable, and ample audit evidence, indicate that:

-  A unified strategic and legal framework for gender equality in Republika Srpska has not been established. However, competent institutions have integrated or partially integrated gender equality principles and standards in approximately 2/3 of strategic documents.

AUDIT GOAL AND AUDIT QUESTIONS

The primary objective of the audit is to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of measures and activities undertaken to ensure and enhance gender equality in the political, public, and economic life of Republika Srpska.

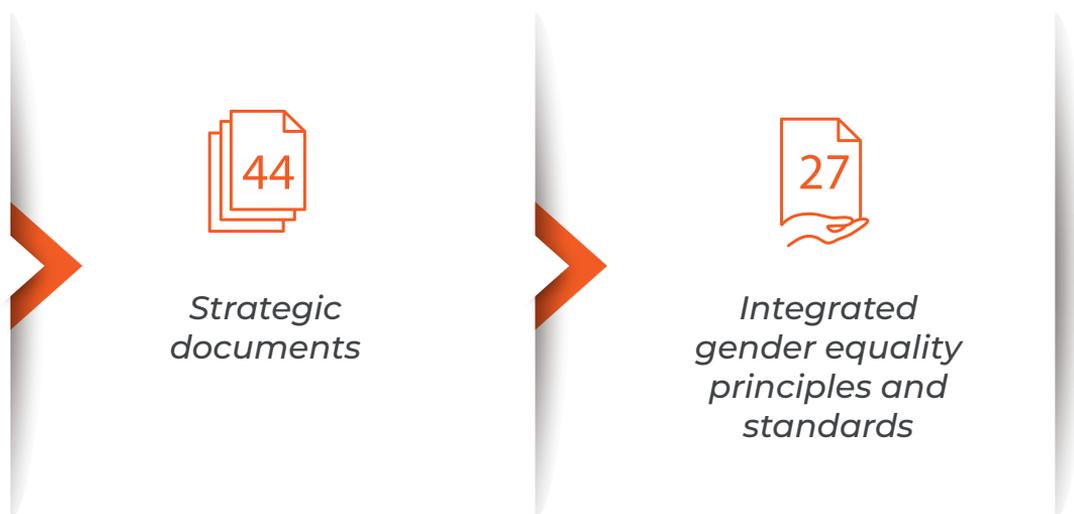
The main audit question is:

Are the measures and activities of the institutions of Republika Srpska conducive to ensuring and enhancing gender equality?

The sub-questions addressed in this performance audit are:

1. Have systemic prerequisites been established for equal representation of women and men in political, public, and economic life?
2. Are the planned results achieved through the implementation of gender equality measures and activities?
3. Is the process of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on measures and activities conducive to sustainable gender equality in the long-term?

Figure 1. Strategic documents in effect during the period 2018-2022 in which gender equality principles and standards are integrated

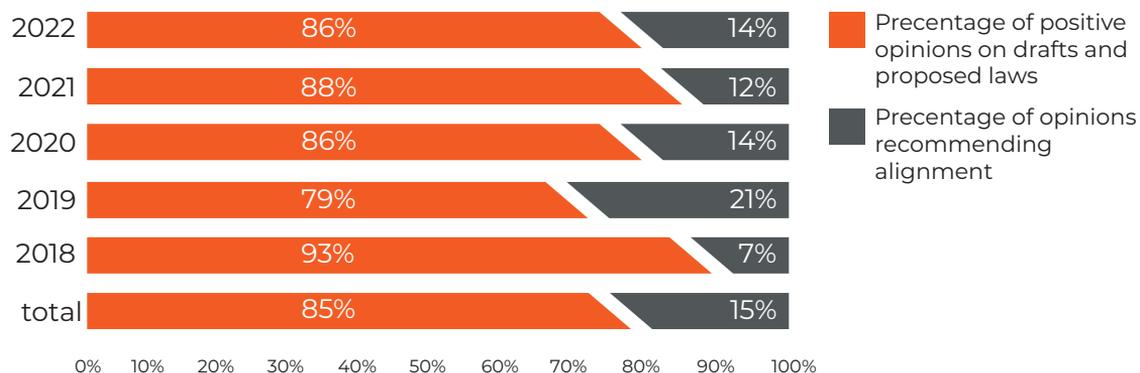


Source: Questionnaires and Ministries' documentation
Illustration: GSRJS RS

- Gender-responsive budgeting is an important segment of gender mainstreaming of the budget system. It is being introduced in Republika Srpska.
- Throughout the observed period, approximately 25% of the strategic documents, laws, and other documents deliberated during sessions of the Government of Republika Srpska were referred to the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska for compliance assessment. The majority of the strategic documents, laws, and other documents referred to the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska for assessment were mostly compliant.
- During the observed period, the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska issued a total of 111 compliance opinions on drafts and proposals of laws in accordance with the Law on Gender Equality and ratified international gender equality instruments. Among these, 85% were positive opinions, while 15% included recommendations for alignment.

Chart 1. Opinions of the Gender Centre of RS on drafts and proposed laws in the period 2018-2022

Structure of the opinion of the Gender Centre of RS on drafts and proposed laws

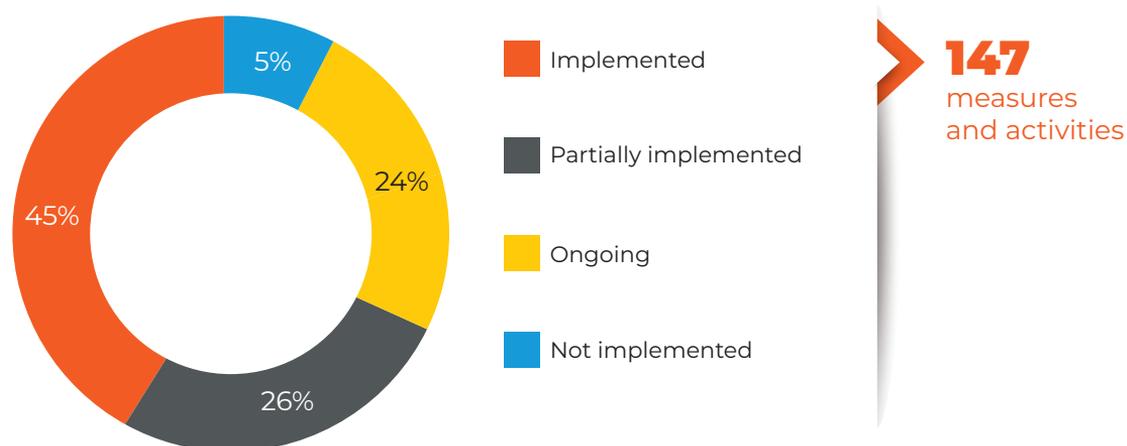


Source: Gender Centre of RS; Questionnaires and documents of the institutions of RS
Illustration: GSRJS RS

- ▶ Gender-sensitive goals, measures, and activities for gender equality in priority areas are planned in various strategic and planning documents of relevant institutions but lack full alignment with each other.
- ▶ Existing records, databases, and data registries in the covered priority areas lack complete and reliable gender-disaggregated data, which is essential for achieving gender equality and providing quality information to decision-makers. Institutions with gender-disaggregated data do not consistently update them.
- ▶ Certain measures and activities for gender equality in priority areas have been continuously implemented for several years, although there is a need for redefinition and systematization to ensure long-term sustainable gender equality in Republika Srpska.
- ▶ Out of 147 measures and activities for gender equality by the end of 2022, 45% have been fully implemented, 26% partially implemented, 24% are ongoing, and 5% have not been implemented.

Chart 2. The level of implementation of measures and activities for gender equality

The level of implementation of measures and activities for gender equality in priority areas in the period 2018-2022



Source: Documents and data on file in institutions

Illustration: GSRJS RS

- The absence of adequate records, databases, and data registries with gender-disaggregated statistical data limits monitoring and analysing the results and effects achieved by measures and activities for gender equality, as well as tracking the implementation of SDG 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".
- Relevant institutions have mostly not established clear indicators in priority areas for monitoring the results of measures and activities for gender equality, aimed at assessing the achievement of gender-sensitive goals. Indicators for monitoring the results of measures and activities for gender equality are often defined descriptively, without specifying baseline and target values.
- Reporting in priority areas with comparative indicators and the level of implementation of measures and activities for gender equality has not been timely and continuous. Reports generally did not contain data and indicators on the success of implemented measures and activities for gender equality and their impact on achieving gender equality sustainable in long term.

Based on the findings of the performance audit, general and specific (individual) audit conclusions were defined.

The main conclusion of this performance audit is that the planned and implemented measures and activities for gender equality are not fully functioning to ensure long-term sustainable gender equality. There is a need to redefine and systematize measures and activities to ensure gender equality in Republika Srpska sustainable in the long-term and the attainment of SDG 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

Consistent with the main conclusion, the following individual findings have been formulated:

- Systemic prerequisites for ensuring equal representation of women and men in political, public, and economic life are only partially in place.
- Existing records, databases, gender analyses, and gender impact assessments do not offer the optimal basis for developing gender-sensitive goals, programs, measures, and activities for gender equality, nor do they provide suitable indicators for monitoring and evaluating outcomes.
- The results of implemented measures and activities for gender equality indicate a modest increase in women's participation in the political, public, and economic spheres of Republika Srpska.
- Monitoring, analysis, and reporting on the results and impacts of implemented measures and activities for gender equality do not fully facilitate the assessment of the levels of ensuring and advancing gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, which are supported by relevant, reliable, and ample audit evidence, the following recommendations have been developed. Implementation of these recommendations has the potential to improve the strategic, legal, and institutional framework, as well as the processes of planning, implementation, monitoring, analysis, and reporting on the outcomes and impacts of gender equality measures and activities. This improvement aims to achieve gender-sensitive objectives and foster sustainable long-term gender equality in Republika Srpska, and the achievement of SDG 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

These recommendations are directed towards the Government of Republika Srpska, the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, ministries, republic administrations, republic administrative organizations, and public institutions in Republika Srpska.

The recommendations target the Government of Republika Srpska as the initiator of legislative proposals and the authority adopting strategies and bylaws, the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska as the institution supporting the promotion of gender equality and equity across all aspects of life and work in Republika Srpska, and ministries within the Government of Republika Srpska that develop and propose strategic and other planning documents, legislative documents, and enact certain bylaws, as well as plan and implement gender equality measures and activities. The recommendations for the Government of Republika Srpska, the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, and the ministries are as follows:

- The Gender Centre of Republika Srpska should propose to the Government of Republika Srpska strategic commitments, goals, and priorities compiled in a strategic document and a law on gender equality. Their implementation will ensure that gender equality in the Republika Srpska is achieved and sustained in the long term.

- The principles and standards for gender equality should be fully integrated into legislation, as well as strategic and other documents.

Recommendations for the institutions of Republika Srpska included in the audit (including the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, ministries, republic administrations, republic administrative organizations, and public institutions):

- Integrate principles and standards for gender equality into mid-term planning documents, budgets, or financial plans according to their respective mandates;
- Establish an efficient and functional system for collecting and managing gender-disaggregated data, alongside conducting gender analyses and gender impact assessments;
- Plan and execute measures and activities for gender equality to actively contribute to the achievement and advancement of gender equality within Republika Srpska;
- Improve the process of monitoring and analysing the status of gender equality and reporting on the achieved results in ensuring and advancing gender equality in Republika Srpska.

FULL REPORT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE AVAILABLE HERE

Montenegro State Audit Institution

WORD OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE,
MEMBER OF THE SENATE

Signing the Agenda 2030 signifies the commitment of national governments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, with supreme audit institutions contributing by evaluating the implementation of national policies and strategies towards these goals. The audit ensures that sustainability efforts remain relevant and attainable, considering perspectives that may not have been initially considered.

Regarding the implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", supreme audit institutions play a pivotal role in bolstering gender equality through audits of national laws, policies, and international conventions in this area. Montenegro has pledged to adhere to international standards in this realm, aiming to diminish gender discrimination and enhance opportunities for equal participation of men, women and persons of different sexual and gender identities in all walks of life.

By incorporating a gender perspective into audits, Montenegro contributes to meeting indicators of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which gauge the presence of monitoring and allocation systems for public finances to promote gender equality and empower women. Aligned with objectives outlined in the Mid-term Plan for Performance Audits, the Montenegro State Audit Institution acknowledges the significance of reinforcing gender equality principles, evident in its inaugural gender audit assessing the effectiveness of gender equality policy implementation in Montenegro, followed by a performance audit focusing on the success of gender-responsive budgeting within this regional parallel performance audit project.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share professional insights with our counterparts from other supreme audit institutions regarding the auditing of implementation of SDGs. Additionally, we commend the dedication of UN Women to enhancing our capabilities through their involvement in a regional parallel performance audit project aimed at fostering global sustainable development.

I firmly believe that acting upon the recommendations stemming from the parallel performance audit will enhance the achievement of goals outlined in national gender equality strategies. These strategies aim to improve conditions for the equal participation of men, women, and persons of different sexual and gender identities, thus fostering greater visibility and recognition of women and girls in society.

- Nikola N. Kovačević

INTRODUCTION

Gender-responsive budgeting integrates gender equality principles into the budgeting process, involving a gender analysis of the budget and restructuring of revenues and expenditures to promote gender equality. Its objective is to include perspectives aimed at enhancing equality between women and men throughout all stages of budget planning and execution.

From May to December 2023, the State Audit Institution conducted an audit titled "Performance Audit of Implementing Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Montenegro" to assess whether competent authorities have effectively established gender-responsive budgeting by integrating the principle of gender equality into the budget process, ensuring equal benefits for both women and men from programs, projects, and services.

According to Article 15 of the Law on the State Audit Institution, upon receiving the final report, auditees must submit an Action Plan for implementing recommendations to the SAI (by January 29, 2024), and a Report on actions taken on the recommendations (by June 29, 2024).

The SAI final report was submitted to the Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of Montenegro.

The audit was carried out under the Agreement on the implementation of a parallel performance audit as part of Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality of the UN Agenda 2030, which aims to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Support for implementing the agreed project activities was provided to the signatories of the agreement by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

SAI AUDITING BOARD

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Member of the Senate
- ▶ **Nikola N. Kovačević**
Chairman of the Senate

AUDIT TEAM

- ▶ **Blažo Savković**
Head of Sector
- ▶ **Jadranka Delibašić**
Head of Department

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Ministry of Finance has issued several key documents, including Instructions for the mid-term budget framework development, Instructions for budget preparation for the upcoming fiscal year, and Guide for program budgeting and the Guide for mid-term budget framework. These documents offer detailed guidelines on incorporating gender-responsive budgeting principles into the program budget structure. The Guidelines on reporting on the execution of gender-responsive program budget and the Guide for program budgeting provide instructions on defining gender responsive budgets. Furthermore, spending units have access to the Methodology for assessing budget gender equality impact.

The budget and related documents contain a clear statement on gender-responsive goals. The Ministry of Finance issues a budget circular encompassing gender-based budget, with clear instructions for its integration. Budget spending units implementing gender-sensitive activities are mandated to furnish information on gender goals and indicators through the budget management information system when submitting budget requests. They must also provide explanations of how budget programs (sub-programs and/or activities/projects) contribute to reducing gender disparities and improving the situation of vulnerable groups in society.

In 2022, training sessions were conducted to facilitate the implementation of the Guidelines and the preparation of gender-responsive analyses for pilot ministries. Seminars and trainings on gender-responsive budgeting were organized by the Secretariat of the Competitiveness Council and the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, with participation from auditee representatives. Moreover, training sessions focused on program budgeting were held for budget analysts from the Ministry of Finance (with 17 participants) and staff from spending units (with over 100 participants).

The State Audit Institution has found that the initial steps were taken towards implementing gender-responsive budgeting in Montenegro, but the sufficient prerequisites for successful practical implementation have not yet been put in place.

The introduction of GRB into Montenegro's budgetary process commenced in 2022, with progress being made in establishing the normative framework and budget preparation tools for gender-responsive budgeting. The Ministry of Finance conducted activities aimed at enhancing the capacities of spending units through training on gender-responsive budgeting. However, key prerequisites for the successful

AUDIT GOAL AND AUDIT QUESTIONS

The goal of the audit was to assess whether competent authorities have effectively established gender-responsive budgeting by integrating the principle of gender equality into the budget process, ensuring equal benefits for both women and men from programs, projects, and services.

Audit questions:

1. Are the necessary prerequisites in place for successful implementation of gender-responsive budgeting?
2. Have the authorities adequately planned budget funds for gender sensitivity?
3. Is the budget allocated for gender sensitivity implemented in accordance with the indicators set during the planning phase?
4. Has there been a proper evaluation of the effects of the executed budgetary funds related to gender sensitivity?

implementation of gender-responsive budgeting remain unfulfilled, primarily because it was not ensured that sufficiently educated and motivated staff, equipped with gender- and age-disaggregated data required for identification of current gender disparities, work on implementing program (gender) budgeting in spending units.

Despite spending units designating a total of €147.2 million in budgetary funds as gender-sensitive when planning budgets for 2022 (€56.26 million) and 2023 (€90.94 million), there has been a general lack of gender analysis and gender impact assessment of the budget programs. In other cases such assessments were carried out across the board, without adequate data, which mainly resulted in the lack of clearly defined gender goals and indicators to measure the progress in achieving results.

Additionally, clear organizational structures for developing and managing budgetary (gender) programs with precisely defined methods of work, roles, and responsibilities have not been established within spending units.

Reports on the execution of gender-responsive budgets indicate allocations to finance budget programs labelled as gender-sensitive, yet only a portion of these funds pertain to the activities which can be confirmed to affect gender inequality. This discrepancy arises from categorizing budget programs as gender-sensitive without conducting data-based gender analysis and technical errors in the budget management information system used for compiling reports.

As a result, it remains uncertain whether the allocations contained in reports on the execution of gender-responsive budgets were entirely utilized to finance activities impacting gender equality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to successfully implement gender-responsive budgeting, the SAI has issued recommendations to auditees.

- ▶▶ There is a need for continuous investment in the capacities of employees responsible for implementing gender-responsive budgeting.
- ▶▶ There is a need for education of decision-makers on the importance of this process for sustainable development of communities.
- ▶▶ Significant attention should be paid to the development of collection and management of gender-disaggregated data and data disaggregated by other categories.

It is recommended to program heads/coordinators/managers of auditees (and other spending units) to ensure that the categorization of programs as gender-sensitive is based on the completed analysis or assessment of their impact on vulnerable (target) groups in society. This is to define clear and achievable goals (results) and appropriate indicators to measure progress in achieving these goals.

To successfully implement gender-responsive budgeting, it is necessary to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation process is conducted regularly with feedback.

Auditees (and other budget spending units) are recommended to compile a report which should include, inter alia, an analysis of gender equality dimensions with gender-disaggregated data and gender statistics; the gender equality-related impact resulting from the implementation of various activities (the program's impact on women, men, and vulnerable groups); key challenges and recommendations/priorities for the next budget planning cycle; the budget amount spent on gender equality interventions; the amount and share (%) of the total budget used for gender-specific interventions or activities promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; and the share (%) of gender-responsive budget implementation compared to the plan.

The Ministry of Finance is recommended to compile a Consolidated Report on the execution of gender-responsive budget which should include, inter alia, a report on the allocation of funds from the budget for gender-responsive activities; a general report on gender-responsive budget; and a report on progress made regarding gender equality and a gender impact analysis.

FULL REPORT IN LOCAL LANGUAGE AVAILABLE HERE

**UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR
WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS
ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE
PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS
WORLDWIDE.**

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



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