



# SHADOW REPORT

on the FIRST VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW  
of the REPUBLIC OF SERBIA on the IMPLEMENTATION  
of the AGENDA 2030 for SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

prepared within the women2030 project



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# SERBIA

The Republic of Serbia is a landlocked country in Southeast Europe with population of 7,2 million (without Kosovo<sup>1</sup>). The GDP per capita in 2018 was \$7,134. In March 2012, Serbia was granted the EU membership candidate status while the accession negotiations formally started in January 2014.

Recognizing the importance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Government of Serbia, in cooperation with the UN Country Team and the donor community, conducted the process of formulating national MDG targets and indicators through an extensive consultation process. The MDGs were incorporated into the National Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted in 2003. In 2006, the Government of Serbia adopted the National Progress Report on MDGs while a Mid-term Report was prepared in 2009. During the Mid-term reporting, the Government decided to remove the 2015 Serbia specific targets since they were perceived not to be realistic due to the Global Economic Crisis. Up to that point progress has been recorded in most of the indicators presented. However, after 2009, the whole process of MDGs monitoring was neglected.

In 2012, Serbia was selected as one of the countries in which Post-2015 national consultations were to be held. Through the national campaign entitled "Serbia We Want", two rounds of consultations were held in which more than 28.000 citizens from wide range of social groups had an opportunity to take active participation. This process has brought a new approach to the definition of development goals in which citizens were directly influencing



Source: Google

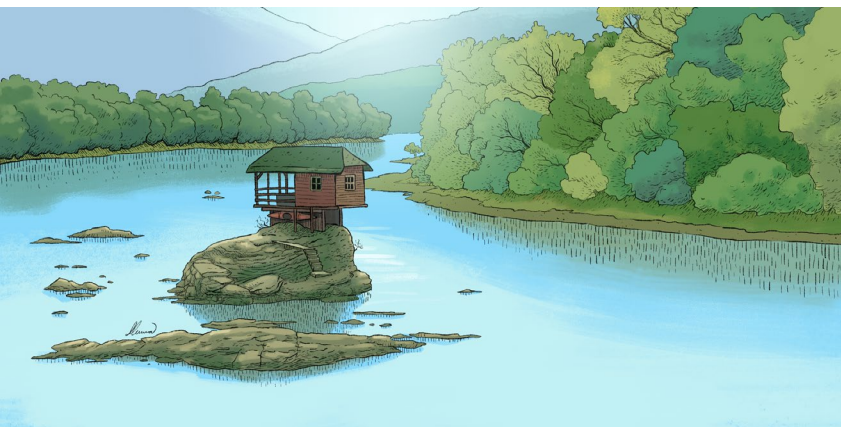
the process, parallel to the governments who had to deliver their proposals of new development policy framework to UN Secretary General. Therefore, as a member of the Open Working Group on SDGs, Serbia took an active part in formulating the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing - which resulted in adoption of the Action Agenda from Addis Ababa in July 2015 - Serbia was the only country from the South-East Europe that participated in the process of establishing the model of SDGs financing.

In **December 2015** the Government established an Inter-ministerial Working Group (WG) headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and composed of representatives of all relevant ministers, offices and agencies to carry out nationalization, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in Serbia. The WG was envisaged to include in its work representatives of civil society, academia and the private sector. This was the formal beginning of the SDGs nationalization process.

**47%**  
employment rate  
in Serbia

**21%**  
of women in  
managerial positions

<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



*River Drina*

**26%**  
of the Government  
members and

**6%**  
of mayors are  
women

Employment rate in Serbia in 2018 was around 47%. Position of women remains unfavorable as despite comprising 51% of the total population they account for 43,7% of those employed. Poverty is widespread in Serbia. The absolute poverty rate ranges between 6% and 7,6% of total population. Proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 36.7% in 2018 could be considered as a cause for concern.

## SDGs IMPLEMENTATION

The first meeting of the Inter-ministerial WG was held in **April 2016**. The WG was to commence extensive activities on the preparation of Serbia's Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In **May 2017** the Government of Serbia concluded a 5-year Development Partnership Framework (DPF) for the period 2016-2020 with the UN Country Team in Serbia. The DPF is grounded in key national development priorities and formulated through and extensive consultation process that took place in 2014 and 2015. As the EU integration is Serbia's strategic goal and all reforms are geared towards it, there is full consensus to implement the SDGs through the EU integration process. Therefore, the prioritization process and the nationalization of the SDGs should follow the same standards and principles established by the EU. The DPF is coherent

and compliant with the following overarching processes: EU integration priorities, Post-2015 National Consultations "Serbia We Want", Agenda 2030 and the Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One.

In **June 2017** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the UN Country Team organized a workshop, aimed at considering the possibilities of linking the process of the EU accession negotiations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In **September 2017** the Focus Group of the National Assembly of Serbia for the Development of Control Mechanisms for the Process of Implementation of the SDGs was established. The Focus Group established the first public hearing on the SDGs implementation. As it provides legal framework and ensures budgeting for the SDGs while liaising with important international stakeholders, the National Assembly becomes the center stage for public advocacy of the SDGs.

In **November 2017** the First Public Hearing on SDGs was organized in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia by the Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee and the Focus Group.

As the institution responsible for official national statistics, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) established a working group for SDGs in **late 2017**. Furthermore, teams were established to be specifically in charge for each of SDGs.

In **February 2018** the report entitled "Serbia and Agenda 2030 - Mapping the National Strategic Framework vis-à-vis the SDGs" was published by the Public Policy Secretariat of the Government of Serbia and GIZ.

In **March 2018** the Government adopted the third revised version of the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis 2018-2021. Strong interlinkages between the SDGs and the Acquis were previously



identified through the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA).

In **May 2018**, the Regional Seminar on SDGs for Parliamentarians of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia was organized in Belgrade, in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

In **June 2018**, workshop for representatives of institutions that are members of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of SDGs was held in the premises of the SORS. Aim of the workshop was to identify and propose institutions that are potential data producers for the indicators of the SDGs.

In **September 2018** the UN Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Mission visited Serbia to support the ongoing efforts of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in contextualizing and adapting the SDGs to national needs in line with the ongoing EU accession and related reform processes.

In **September 2018** Serbia hosted the Sub-regional Conference on Promoting Progress in Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, providing momentum towards achievement of the SDGs throughout the Western Balkan region.

In **October 2018** the second workshop was organized the SORS. It was attended by relevant specialists from relevant institutions in charge for monitoring and providing data for the individual indicators.

In **February 2019** the manual entitled “Agenda 2030 in my Municipality – A Handbook for Practitioners for Localizing SDGs” was published by the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) and GIZ.

In **April 2019** the Office for Cooperation with Civil Society of the Government of Serbia launched a public call inviting CSOs to provide contributions to the VNR by filling and submitting questionnaire which

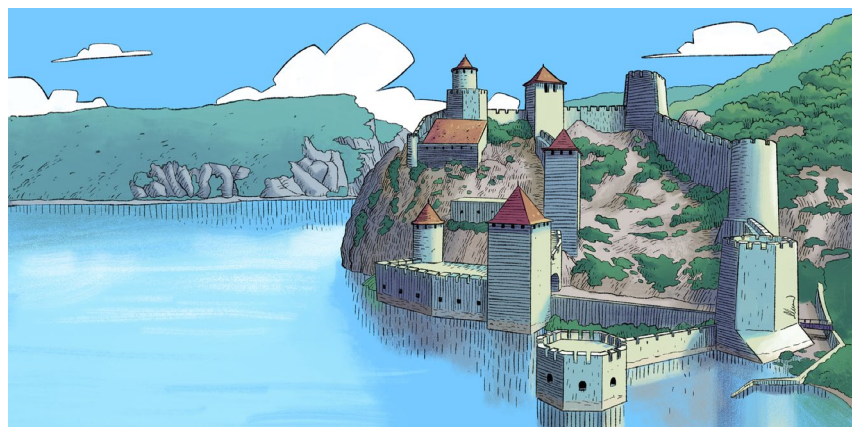
was available on the website of the Office. Result of the survey were later to be attached to the VNR.

In **June 2019** the first VNR of Serbia was presented in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia at the Public Hearing organized by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Focus Group. The first VNR of Serbia was also presented at the Public Hearing in the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

In **July 2019** (on 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2019) the First VNR of Serbia was presented within the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on SD in New York. After the First VNR of Serbia was presented, representatives of NGO community from Serbia had an opportunity to intervene by reading their statements on the VNR, while the EASD used the occasion to present findings gained through drafting the Shadow Report,



*Đavolja Varoš (Devil's Town)*



*Golubac Fortress*

prepared within the Women2030 project, on behalf of Women Major Group. Two statements by the EASD are given in the Annex of this report.

In **November 2019** the research report entitled “Perception and awareness of the citizens on SDGs” was presented in Belgrade. The report was prepared by DEMO-STAT based on the survey undertaken in June 2019 on the sample size of 1000 persons. Among else, it showed that 80% of the responders are not familiar with the term and concept of sustainable development. That could be considered as alarming finding and implies to considerable need for awareness raising and education necessary for wider understanding this complex concept.

## VNR OF SERBIA – INITIAL FINDINGS

During the first presentation of the VNR of Serbia at the Public Hearing in the National Assembly it was stated that priority SDGs (those given the “special attention” to) are: SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 16 and

SDG 17. As this is not visible in the VNR itself, it stays unclear who decided about this prioritization and based on which criteria.

The VNR is focused on the youth (as they will become pillars of the society and agent of changes by 2030) and local self-governments units (as they are able to identify the needs of the local population and to find best way to meet those needs). Therefore, the report provides perspective of the youth as well as perspective of local self-governments within the progress analysis for majority of the SDGs. However, gender and environmental perspectives of the VNR could be considered as insufficient.

Performance of SDGs regarding gender and environmental issues assessed through analysis of the presence of those two issues in the progress analysis given in the VNR is shown in the Table 1.

It is indicative that gender and environmental aspect are not simultaneously

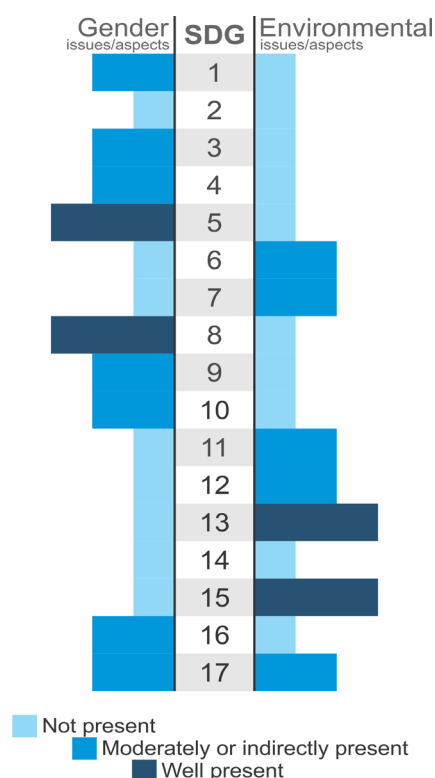


Table 1: Presence of gender and environmental issues in the VNR of Serbia

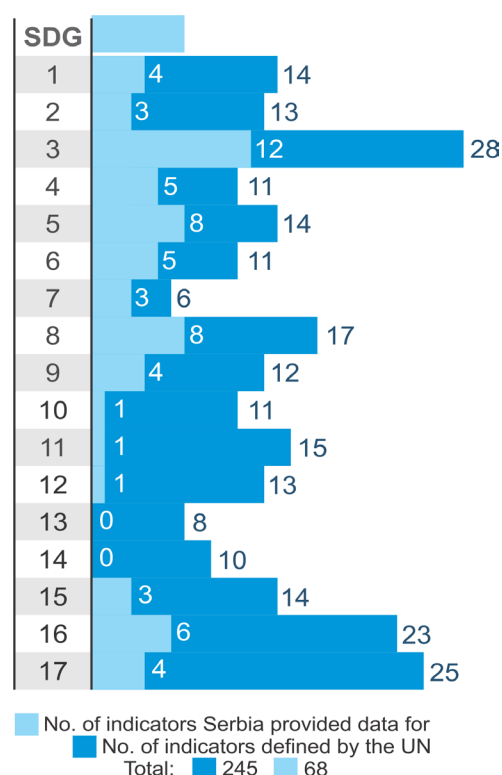


Table 2: Number of indicators the National Statistical Office of Serbia has provided data for

present in any of SDGs analysis, except indirect presence in the analysis of SDG17.

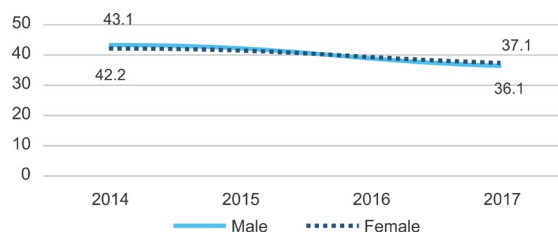
According to the National Statistical Office, relevant data are available for 68 SDGs Indicators. Overview, as of November 2019, is given in the Table 2.

Accession to the EU is priority of the Republic of Serbia. It is considered that implementation of reforms aimed at fulfilling the EU accession criteria contributes significantly to achieving of the SDGs, and vice versa. All development plans and public policy documents in the process of Serbia's EU integration should integrate the Agenda 2030 and use it to profile Serbia as a future EU member state.

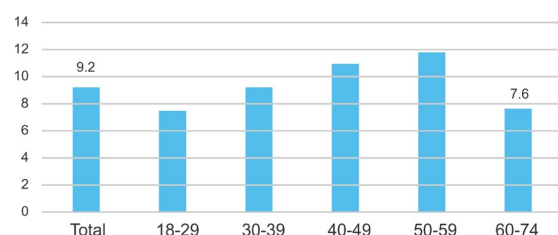
## POLICY CONSULTATIONS MEETING

The EASD organized the policy consultations meeting with the representatives of the WISE SEE Network (Women in Sustainable Energy South-East Europe) on 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 at the premises of Impact Hub, in Belgrade. The WISE SEE project promotes women's meaningful participation and representation in sustainable energy development, climate change and environmental protection, and has successfully mapped women professionally engaged in those sectors by creating a database of around 180 women. The initial contact had been established prior to the consultation meeting by a short introductory e-mail to the women listed in the database together with the request to fill in the questionnaire related to their engagement in the process of achieving the SDGs. Twenty-one women had sent their answers and expressed their interest to participate in the process of drafting VNR Shadow Report whereas 8 women took active part in the consultation meeting. As the VNR was not publicly available prior to the meeting, the initial version of the Shadow Report presented at the meeting was drafted based on desk research. According to the contributions and inputs provided during the meeting, the following SDGs should be

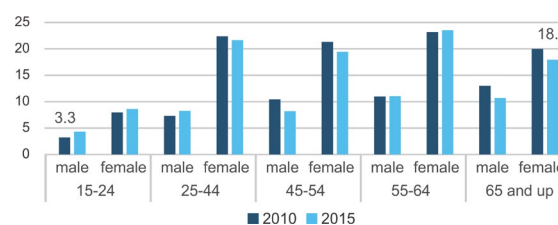
Following indicators with strong gender component are provided by the National Statistical Office:



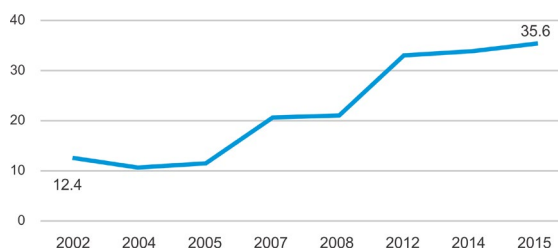
Proportion of population under poverty and social exclusion risk (%)



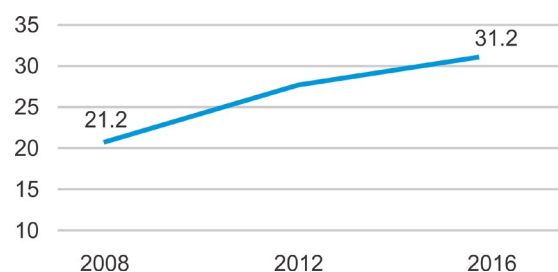
Proportion of women and girls aged 18 to subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by current or former intimate partner in last 12 months (2018; %)



Proportion of time spent unpaid domestic and care work by age and gender (%)



Proportion of women in national parliament (%)



Proportion of women in local self-governments (%)

1 NO POVERTY

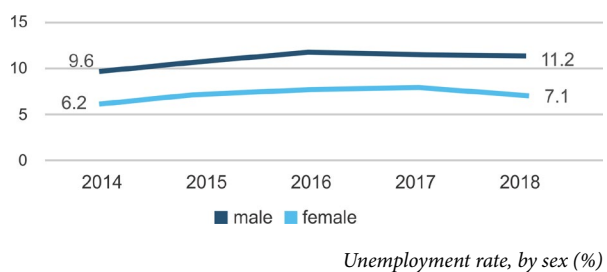
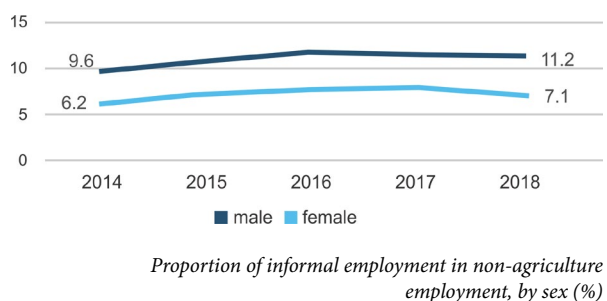
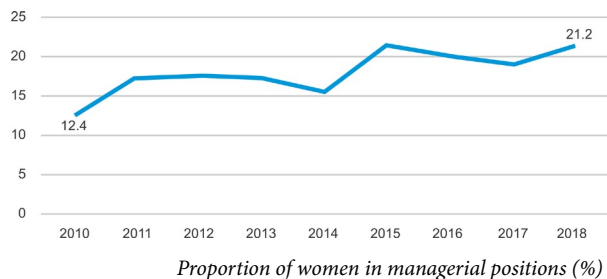
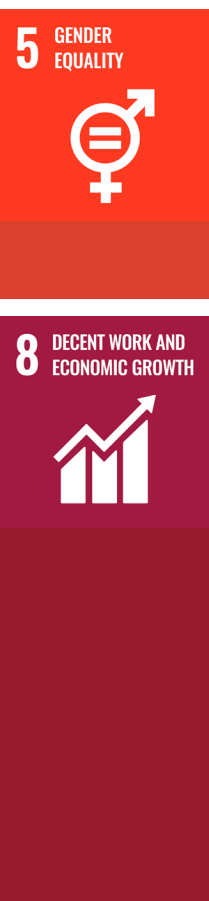


5 GENDER EQUALITY





Following indicators with strong gender component are provided by the National Statistical Office:



the subject of the Shadow Report: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13. Before the consultation meeting, information about engagement of the EASD in preparing the Shadow Report was shared with the Cabinet of Ms Slavica Djukic Dejanovic, Minister without portfolio responsible for demography and population policy and President of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the Agenda 2030. Representative of the Cabinet participated in the consultation meeting and provided necessary inputs regarding the VNR. It was agreed that direct bilateral consultations between the EASD and the Cabinet will take place in forthcoming period.

The second policy consultation meeting was held back to back with the yearly meeting of Eco-schools coordinators. The meeting was supported by the Municipality of Cajetina, located in Western Serbia, and it gathered more than 80 participants among which were representatives of local communities, Eco-schools and NGOs dealing with environmental issues. The meeting was used as opportunity for presenting the Draft Shadow Report and collecting additional information on the local level. The overall conclusions were that: the SDGs related issues are not well known at the local level, there is a lack of information from the relevant institutions working in the SDGs issues on the national level, there is a need for better information sharing with local communities, and there is a need for better promotion of the SDGs and awareness raising in that regard. Currently, Eco-schools could be considered as the main driver for SDGs achievements as the members of this network understand the importance of being a part of global initiatives and have knowledge for implementing activities aimed to achieve all SDGs equally. Through the Eco-schools network, special attention in the following period will be given to making local communities more pro-active in activities performed by Eco-schools in order to achieve specific SDGs relevant for the entire community.





## GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING TOOL SURVEY

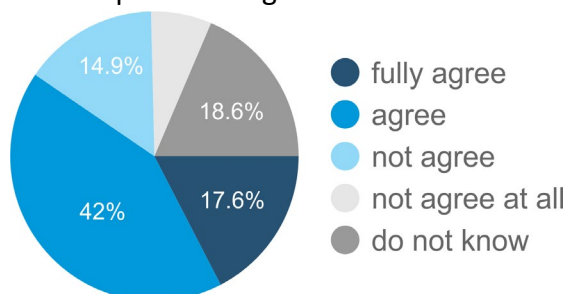
Gender impact assessment and monitoring tool (GIM tool) has been developed in the framework of the Women2030 programme, with the explicit objective of helping women and gender civil society organizations to implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a particular focus on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.

In the period August – October 2019 the EASD organized a survey in the form of on-line questionnaire prepared in accordance with the GIM tool guidelines. In total, 188 persons (of which more than 80% were women) took part in the survey. Some of the illustrative responses with strong gender component are given below:

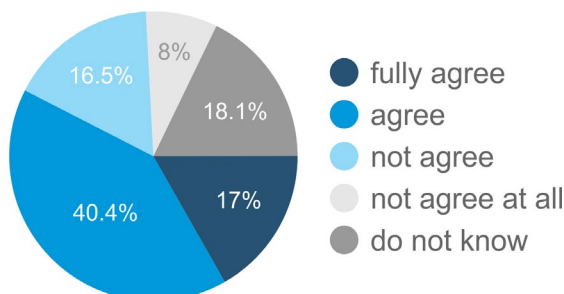
The EASD intends to continue with developing of similar surveys in order to measure gender sensitive indicators of SDGs and to monitor and assess changes and progress over time.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Under its existing strategic framework, Serbia is already committed to the achievement of the SDGs. Nevertheless, there are areas where key sector-specific strategies are missing or where the implementation of specific strategic documents is not monitored, which hinders the assessment of Serbia's progress in the achievement of the relevant SDGs. Legal framework should undergo continuous improvement through inclusive participatory process in order to become more gender sensitive.



POLL: Do women have influence on political processes and decisions on the local level?



POLL: Do women have influence on political processes and decisions on the national level?



POLL: In your opinion, what could contribute to more equality between men and women in your community/neighbourhood? (rank from 1 to 8, whereas 1 is the highest priority)



*Negative impact of the indoor air pollution caused by wide utilization of solid fuels in inappropriate stoves. Those are mostly women who fuel the stoves and cook on them.*

The level of gender equality is not satisfactory. Women in Serbia are still far from having equal opportunities. Although the level of participation of women at all levels of political engagement has been increased, it is noticeable that women are still underrepresented on the decision-making positions. Women account for 35,6% of MPs, 23% of the Government members and 6% of mayors. It was reported during consultation meeting that there are still local self-governments in Serbia without any female member. Participation of women in decision making should be stimulated.

Serbia is the first non-EU country that introduced the Gender Equality Index, and the data point to a lag the EU average in almost all gender equality areas, with a serious gap in the area of labor and money. The pay gap between women and man is 11%. Also, women labor is mostly concentrated in low paid services sector. Eradication of any forms of gender-based discrimination on labor market and in the field of public decision-making is precondition for sustainable development. Considerable efforts must be undertaken to guarantee same salaries for men and women for the same work, to stimulate women entrepreneurship and to diminish existing social division between “men job” and “women job”.

Due to strong gender stereotypes, parenthood is still considered as role and responsi-

bility of the woman, which is the basic reason leading towards various forms of discrimination. Those are mostly women who leave jobs, take half-time job or are unemployed in order to be able to take care about kids or other family members. Indicatively, 80% of those who left job due to “family reasons” are women whereas 98% of those who work in households only are women. Also, 79% of single-parent families are of “mother and kids” type. Women owe 29,7% of real estates in Serbia.

More than a half of complaints submitted to the Commissioner for Protection of Equality are related to the gender-based discrimination.

Domestic violence is considerable issue in Serbia, with tendency of growing in last few years. Women account 80% of victims of this kind of violence.

Depopulation of rural areas is a challenge Serbia is facing with. In order to stimulate people to stay in rural areas and to work in agriculture, aside of various economic support measures special role of women in rural communities should be emphasized and various social benefits provided. Nowadays, women in rural areas are one of the most vulnerable groups related regarding equal possibilities for enjoying basic rights in all fields of life.

Traditional decision-making role in the community and the family is attached to men. As shown by initial analysis of data related to educational institutions taking part in the Eco-Schools program, managerial role in elementary and high schools is mostly conducted by men, whereas in the pre-school institutions share of men and women holding managerial role is almost equal.

Nexus women-human rights-environment is to be considered as horizontal issue, intersected within all aspects of society and all SDGs. Therefore, all SDGs are important for reaching gender equality, human rights and environmental protection.

Negative impact of the indoor air pollution

caused by wide utilization of solid fuels in inappropriate stoves is noticeable in Serbia. Moreover, it has a strong gender perspective as those are mostly women who fuel the stoves and cook on them. This is also connected with the poverty. According to the WHO data, number of premature deaths caused by indoor air pollution is ten times higher in middle- and low-income countries. Serbia is considered as a middle-income country. Kids are also very exposed to this kind of the indoor pollution.

Gender aspect of the SDG 6 is not mentioned at all in the VNR of Serbia, although that aspect is very specific. Girls and women have specific sanitation needs, especially related to the menstrual hygiene. These specific needs should be considered especially in schools and public buildings. There are schools in Serbia, particularly in rural areas, which still have pit toilets outside of school building. According to available information, 1/5 of schools in Serbia do not fulfill some of sanitary requirements. On the individual level, (in)accessibility of products for menstrual hygiene relates to poverty.

As women are more engaged in households, they could considerably contribute to identifying possibilities and needs for improvement in energy efficiency and sustainable consumption patterns, especially in identifying the best local solutions, based on their everyday experience. Women could also catalyze behavioral changes among family members towards more sustainable way of life. Therefore, active participation of women in sectors of energy and resources should be stimulated, and more women should be included in decision making processes in these fields.

Systematic and targeted efforts should be undertaken in order to raise awareness of women about their role and possibilities they have in SDGs implementation. This could be done through organizing targeted educational programs (supporting lifelong education concept as well as enhancing activism) for women, financial support to CSOs and initiatives/networks which promote gender equality and role of women in the society, financial support to women entrepreneurship. Considering nega-

tive impacts of climate change, considerable attention should be given to role of women in adaptation and mitigation measures.

More statistical data should be gender aggregated.

## ABOUT THE EASD

**ENVIRONMENTAL AMBASSADORS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (EASD)** is an **association of experts**, having the expert, scientific, innovative, professional and social character (*think-thank*), established in Serbia, with the intention of acting in:

- the general interest of advancing, popularization and promotion of **scientific and research work**, and
- the public interest in the areas of: **sustainable development, environmental protection and education** and in other areas of implementation of the objectives, including promotion of culture values.

The EASD conducts its mission through **research, consultancy, expert analysis, innovation education and promotion**. The EASD is strongly committed to gender equality and improving of the status of women in all areas of life with the special emphasis on the environmental sector.

**The EASD** has special consultative status in UN ECOSOC and accreditation in United Nations – UNEP (UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum); Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SA-ICM) NGO Focal Point; National Member of The Foundation for Environmental Education – FEE Serbia; Institutional Member of ACUNS - Academic Council on the United Nations System; Member of the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform; Member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network – SDSN; IPEN network Participating Organization; EYD2015 Civil Society Alliance member; Regional ECF Network member.

Contact: [office@ambassadors-env.com](mailto:office@ambassadors-env.com)

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FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



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# ANNEX

## The First Statement of the EASD during the HLPF 2019

In the VNR there are plenty of references to the Strategies, Laws and other legal documents for single areas. However, we believe that the implementation is lagging and not enough is done to apply the legal regulation. There are several examples for that, and we would point out most important ones:

- Gender is in the focus of many strategies and actions. But there is an immense re-traditionalization of gender roles and oppressive structures toward women. There is also an increase in various forms of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence and attacks on women who are activists and publicly active. We encourage the inclusion of indicators on physical, sexual and psychological violence for women and girls aged 15 and older. What will government do to prevent it gender – based violence?

- As for the environmental goals, we welcome the plans of the Serbian government to improve carbon-neutral agriculture, and sustainable industry. But we are very worried about lack of implementation of the existing regulation related to environment protection and climate change: air pollution, biodiversity lost and investors-driven spatial planning that turns the land into the construction slots, destroying natural environment and green areas. Further on, we would like to know what will be done to stop the construction of a small hydroelectric plants on the rivers that can cause permanent damage to watercourses.

We would also like to add that nexus women-human rights-environment is to be considered as horizontal issue, intersected within all aspects of society and all SDGs. Therefore, all SDGs are important for reaching gender equality, human rights and environmental protection.

## The Second Statement of the EASD during the HLPF 2019

The VNR of Serbia provides perspective of **the youth**. However, this group faces serious challenges. We wonder what the government will do to improve chances for the employment for young people, so they don't leave massively the country, as they do now? Furthermore, youth, but also all other citizens, including women and vulnerable groups, are at risk of unemployment and poverty because of political party financing and partisan employment. Will government do something to stop it? Is the optimism and an optimistic tone present throughout the entire report justified, in the light of the information on youth unemployment for example?

We are very also worried about increased centralization of education, accompanied with commercialization and privatization of education with a low quality and increased plagiarism of all education degree. Dual system of education puts especially young people at risk, since it drives them to less qualified and less paid jobs.

We see some very worrisome tendencies in the economic area. Big number of subsidized foreign companies did not lead to the incensement of quality of life; on the contrary, they increased the number of precarious workers and denied workers' right to decent work and freedom of association and trade unionism, while causing environmental damages. On the other hand, the big number of state-owned companies is hindering healthy economic growth. It seems that not enough space was given to the world of work having in mind its importance for sustainable development.

Finally, we are worried about lack of engagement of various actors and stakeholders in the policy creation, implementation, monitoring and reporting. There is a serious risk for the freedom of speech, for journalists and independent media, for civil society and academia, as well as local government autonomy.

Do you think that implementation of SDGs is possible without different actors, various voices and partnership at all levels?