



Briefing

Political Trends & Dynamics

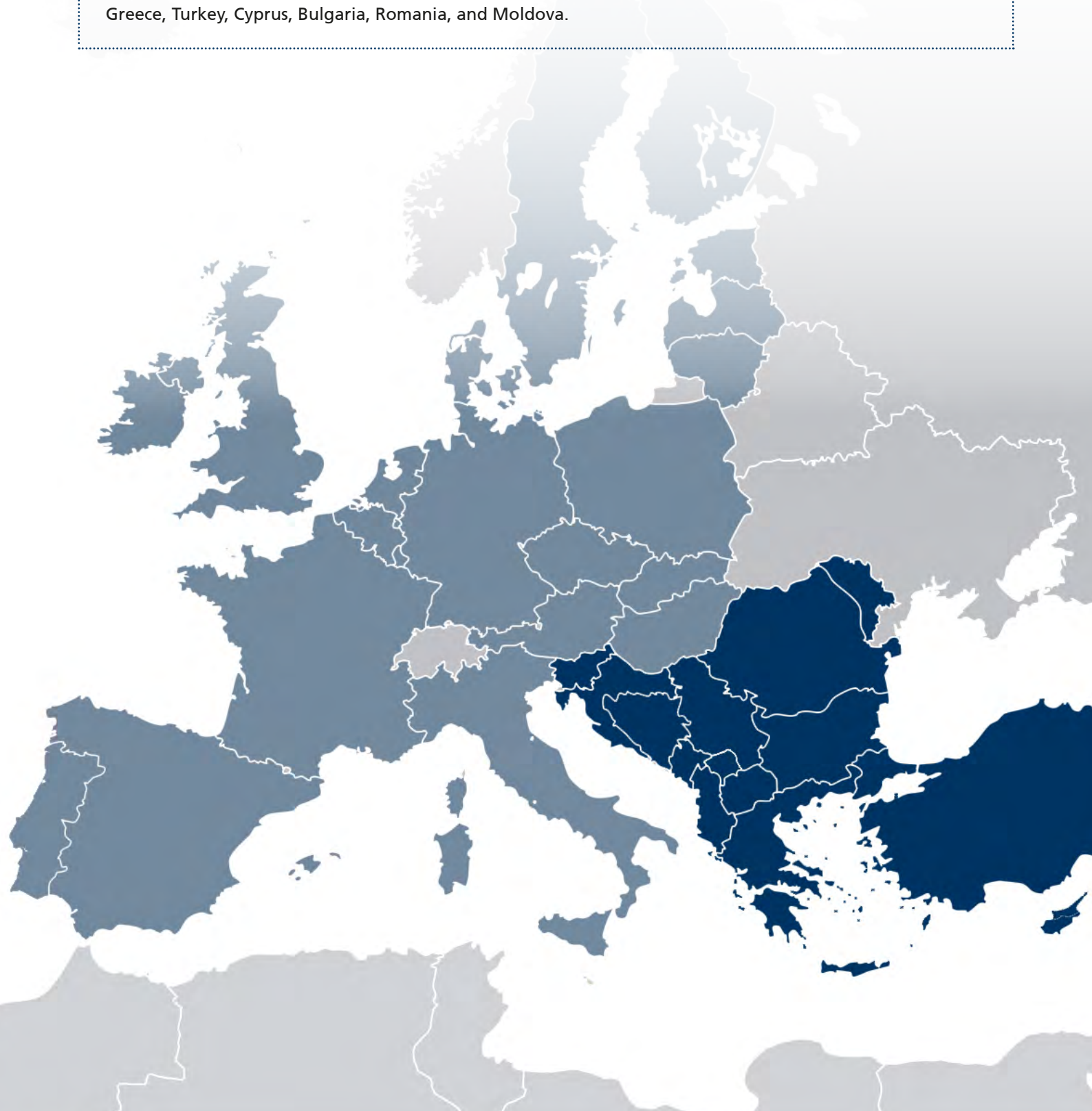
Gender Politics in Southeast Europe

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Political Trends & Dynamics in Southeast Europe

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Peace and stability initiatives represent a decades-long cornerstone of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's work in southeastern Europe. Recent events have only reaffirmed the centrality of Southeast European stability within the broader continental security paradigm. Both democratization and socio-economic justice are intrinsic aspects of a larger progressive peace policy in the region, but so too are consistent threat assessments and efforts to prevent conflict before it erupts. Dialogue SOE aims to broaden the discourse on peace and stability in southeastern Europe and to counter the securitization of prevalent narratives by providing regular analysis that involves a comprehensive understanding of human security, including structural sources of conflict. The briefings cover fourteen countries in southeastern Europe: the seven post-Yugoslav countries and Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova.



Editorial

Jasmin Mujanović & Alida Vračić

2017 was a major year in the advancement of women's issues and women's causes, indeed, one of the most significant in decades. The #MeToo campaign, and the campaigns which preceded it, cast into sharp relief the endemic culture of sexual assault and abuse that permeates much of the professional world. And while the focus was primarily on Hollywood and the media and entertainment sector, conditions are, if anything worse, for working women outside the limelight.

The situation in southeastern Europe then is perhaps still worse. The pay gap between men and women in the region is pronounced, and arguably worse than the spotty official data suggests, there are few meaningful legal protections against harassment and assault, sexual violence and domestic abuse rates are on the increase, and women are chronically underrepresented in virtually all facets of public life, including in the region's EU member states.

It did not used to be this way. After the end of World War II, southeast European states and the rest of the continent were in relatively similar positions, with women making their first, contested steps into political and social life as autonomous citizens on the back of dramatic post-war social reorganizing. In much of Europe women had only recently gained the vote, and legal frameworks for the recognition of their full civic and human rights were only just emerging. And in southeast Europe itself during the socialist period significant macro-economic strides were made in women's standing in society, albeit within the context of an otherwise authoritarian regime.

Indeed, in comparison to the contemporary post-Cold War moment, the socialist period was a halcyon age for the region. Since then however, and in particular since the 1990s in the case of the Western Balkans, the situation has bifurcated: women have continued to make major strides in western Europe, while in southeastern Europe (and eastern Europe more broadly), their overall social position has stagnated and even regressed.

Why has this happened and, perhaps more importantly, what have been women's response to these changing socio-economic and socio-political tides? Ironically, it has been through far-right and center-right parties that women have most prominently reemerged in political life in the region as in much of Europe. Witness only rise of figures like Pia Kjörgaard of the Danish Peoples' Party, Siv Jensen of the Norwegian Progress Party, Marine Le Pen of the French Front National, Frauke Petri of the German Alternative für Deutschland, along with comparatively moderate figures like Croatia's Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic and Serbia's Ana Brnabic. But whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the talk was of "liberation", the rhetoric of right-wing politicians today stresses "traditional values" and the "traditional family." In other words, individual female leaders have themselves become implicated in the decline in women's visibility and leadership in public affairs.

But how much power do these right-oriented women actually have, especially within their own conservative and far-right movements? In this issue we take a closer look at the political equality, economic equality, and social equality of women in southeastern Europe. We discuss the question of real power and decision making processes and how women feature therein, the state of women's rights in the region, and the linkages between the Euro-Atlantic order and gender politics. Moreover, we have asked our contributors specifically to reflect on whether (and to what degree) conditions in the region have changed in the past decade and how the process of EU accession, in particular, has influenced gender equality in the region – and what is required still for full gender equality in the EU and its neighborhood?

Gender Equality on the Left

Zita Gurmai

When I was in Croatia last summer, I learned about a small region named Konavle, where a group of women preserve and practice traditional embroidery and silk production. After being driven almost to extinction during the war, the silkworm was brought back to the village 18 years ago. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of a small number of local women, the tradition stays in the collective memory and can be passed on to the next generation. By developing a small business and entrepreneurial skills, the women found a way to empower themselves. What I learned from this experience is to look back at my political career and to remind myself why I decided to go into politics. These women from Konavle embodied everything I believe in: being active for your community's needs, ensuring and sustaining a fair life with equal opportunities for this generation and the next. It also reflected to what I dedicated my professional life to: social democracy and empowering women.

Changing things for the better takes time, and twenty years ago it was hard to imagine that PES Women would transform from a platform of exchange within the Party of European Socialists to an active, outward-looking women's movement, with real political influence on the European scene. Increasing the number of women in political and public positions is important and women seem to have more decision-making power and influence than ever before. Progress is being made even in the most conservative societies. Nevertheless, as of June 2016, only 22.8 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995, when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. Globally, there are 38 countries in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including 4 chambers with no women at all. In my country Hungary for example, only 20 out of 199 MPs are women, and there is no single woman holding a position in the current government. As these numbers reflect, there is a long way to go to achieve sustainable gender equality.

But even if we have women in different political control levels, does that automatically imply that gender equality and women's rights are promoted and defended, or that women have real power to improve the situation and roles that women play?

This is one of the most pressing questions that we are working on in PES Women, and it was also the main topic of our Annual Conference in Lisbon last November. Under the slogan "From gaining to owning power" we invited politicians, trade unionists, and civil society organisations to debate and explore how women can obtain true empowerment and how this can be translated into political activism. The fact is that we see women mobilizing, especially in the streets and on social media; the #metoo campaign against sexual harassment has proven that we do not have to stay silent. But it is important to look beneath the surface of such a phenomenon and to ask ourselves how this increasing mobilisation of women can be translated into political engagement. The movement cannot stop with outrage towards perpetrators; we need to move it forward into a much more far-reaching campaign for gender equality, to fight the way the world is structurally engineered against women. We need to build an equitable system in which women have the power to lead fulfilling lives. After all, gender-based violence, sexism, and sexual misbehaviour are a consequence of an unequal society and unequal power structures. To change this, we need to break down stereotypes, change mentalities, and implement policies that improve the lives of women, such as the 'European Council Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence', for whose ratification in all EU Member States we have been calling since 2011.

This is one of the reasons why it is so important not only to engage more women in politics, especially progressive ones, but also to convince political parties, that are usually still dominated by white middle-aged men, to put gender equality at the heart of their political programs. Given austerity politics and the enduring rise of extremist and conservative forces throughout Europe and beyond, advances in women's rights are stagnating and in many cases even compromised. When we look at the current elec-

tion results throughout Europe, a worrying picture emerges. Particularly in South East European countries like my own, we see that authoritarian parties are still preventing regime change, and weak institutions and a fragile civil society are obstacles to democratization and women's empowerment.

The young generation is heavily affected by the aftermath of the financial crisis, by structural changes in the labour market and by ongoing demographic deviations, which put them at huge disadvantage. In addition to that, a lot of people, young and old, are leaving our political parties. They are looking for new political options and identities, which they seem not to find with the Social Democratic Parties of their respective country, because they are seen as outdated, distant from the people, institutionalized and became more brand names than real action takers. While trust is lost on one side, political power is gained by populist and far-right parties on the other side, and this is putting social democracy at risk. The problem here at stake is that less democracy means less gender equality and vice versa. In a huge part of the region, we witness a retraditionalization of gender roles, which comes hand in hand with this negative trend. The recent attacks on sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and on LGBTI-rights are only one visible consequence.

In order to overcome this backlash, we need to find a renewed strategy as a political movement as a whole, but we also need to get away from the critical mass approach in favour of a new narrative for gender parity in political life, where equal representation of women and men is seen and treated as a precondition for political institutions. But until this becomes reality, we must support female leadership to meet women's interest and needs. Women in powerful positions are key factor to ensuring that improvements occur and that they 'trickle down' to positively impact the lives of citizens and communities. We believe that promoting women's active citizenship, voice and leadership has the potential to make societies more vibrant and its institutions more resilient and responsive. What we need to achieve in addition to women's representation is a shift from formal to actual empowerment. Because we still witness that real power is hard to achieve for different reasons including the nature of portfolios held by women and their responsibilities at the work-place, the lack of budget or visibility they get, or their double burden as principal carers and professionals. On top of that, women are discouraged from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, including stereotyping through the media.

But that is the reason why feminist governments and women's organisations in political parties will not become obsolete in the near future. They matter in particular as long as they only serve as a decorative figurehead to have women's issues covered in political programmes and are not considered as an integrated part of the parties' political identities. There must occur a shift of paradigm to fully implement party structures and procedures that remove all barriers for the participation of women, to develop initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and electoral processes and specially to take measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

In my fourteen-year mandate as PES Women President, I have learned that achievements in gender equality are only possible with political will, financial means, intersectionality, intergenerational dialogue, and joint efforts of women and men. With the upcoming European elections in 2019, we have a new chance to advance women's political representation. We in PES Women, our partners and all the other strong women who fight their daily battles in the shark tank of local, national and European politics will make social justice as well as true and equal decision-making power of women an utmost priority.

Gender Rights at the Periphery

Mija Javornik

The EU has arguably taken some solid strides towards gender equality, though inequality remains pernicious in several crucial areas. The share of women in the European Parliament has grown from 16 per cent in 1979 to 37 per cent today. Although the differences between countries are large, ranging from 9 per cent in Lithuania to 55 per cent in Ireland, the growth is impressive.¹ However, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 2017 Gender Equality Index shows that progress comes at a very slow pace. The overall EU's score on gender equality is now 66.2 out of 100 (just four points higher than ten years ago), but levels of inequality differ widely across Member States.

In the EU's periphery, the situation is equally varied – with positive movement in some areas and stagnation in others. In SEE, women's representation in political decision-making is, on average, positive. If in 1990 women on average held around 7 per cent of seats, they hold 27 per cent seats now. Croatia and Slovenia had, and Serbia has their first female Prime Ministers; Kosovo had and Croatia has a female president; Slovenia has parity in its cabinet; several countries in the region have female financial, defense, interior, and foreign affairs ministers. That notwithstanding, the trends are mixed. New elections do not always bring more women to real power positions, or they bring them to the highest power positions, only to show that they do not even try to engage in transformative politics.

At the same time the main challenges of gender inequality persist: feminized poverty, growing female overrepresentation in the precariat and the share of unpaid care work; wide gender pay and pension gaps; uneven progress on tackling harassment and violence, ensuring access to education, health, sexual and reproductive rights, and paid maternal and family leave. Open attacks on a secular state, on "gender ideology", freedom of choice, and feminism in general exist not only in the realm of social media, but in the parliamentary politics and in mainstream media and public spaces.

Since the collapse of state socialism and dismembering of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, women in post-conflict societies have created a specific path to more equal participation of women in political decision-making. Mixed methods such as regional cooperation through Stability Pact Gender Task Force, cross-cutting national coalitions, sandwich strategies, and repeated parallel electoral campaigns were used. The enactment of firm gender quotas in BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, and (though weaker) Croatia followed. A paradox was created: women in political parties did not invent or start this process, they merely joined it.

Women in socio-democratic parties began create women's party organizations, tried to introduce quotas for party organs, and made their party congresses accept elementary programmatic statements on gender equality, as well as include at least one gender equality issue in the party electoral promises. This grew to nearly all parliamentary parties, but in the long-term, not much changed – the essential

Opinion

Dying left wing parties or, more frequently, neoliberal or nationalistic parties calling themselves socialists / social democrats no longer promote coherent gender equality policies; they have a different public agenda. When dealing with gender issues, it happens for external reasons, as fulfilling conditions for European Union accession or avoiding criticism. However, something it is clear; analysing concrete economic data, we notice increasing social inequalities, women overrepresentation among the poorer strata of the population and wide structural wage gaps preserved. In the society we live in, where power and wealth are so strongly connected, this reality makes us understanding that the presence of a few women in higher level positions could be misleading; we are wrong labelling it as a progress in gender equality, because it isn't! Progress is needed and expected but it has not yet arrived and it will not arrive without a general struggle for changing legal rules, institutions, behaviors, and mentalities.

Gabriela Cretu
MP, Romania, Social Democratic Party

¹ Men and women distribution, European Parliament, Results of the 2014 European Elections.

imbalance of power remained due to low female party membership and 'old boys' networks'. Women's success in the struggle for more equal representation, for legislation on gender equality or for better laws on violence against women, did not come from their power within their parties, but rather from specific broader issue coalitions, which had the support of society and of external international actors before elections and thus forced parties to deliver better legal frameworks. Some parties even changed their attitude – when this did not cost them much in the party itself or in the state budget when they were in power.

The beauty and the curse of the issue coalitions is that they operate very effectively and have influence over society, political parties, governments, and parliaments – but only till they achieve their clearly set goal. For instance: when quotas are enacted, the coalition made to achieve them deactivates. It reappears, in the best of cases, when its achievement is attacked, as in Serbia, where the revived coalition for quotas succeeded and in BiH and Croatia, where the women quota coalitions failed – the changes, which were enacted de facto, made the Croat and Bosnian quotas ineffective. This means that these issue coalitions are not a permanent powerhouse for any women's rights activists, and especially not for women's rights activists from political parties.

The political landscape in the SEE has dramatically changed since the global economic and political crises in 2007/8. A more multipolar world has led to competing geopolitical interests in the region. Traditional parties of the moderate centre, including people's parties and social-democratic parties, lost their stabilising position in the metropolises of Europe. A shift towards the far right in the US and Britain accompany the radicalization of the political mainstream in the EU. For women, the move to the right does not bode well. The EU Commission reduced its gender equality strategy to a bureaucratic paper. Little by little, the prospect of EU accession is losing its appeal in the SEE. Donors with progressive agendas are moving out of the region, making the creation and functioning of specific women's issue coalitions beyond violence and women's entrepreneurship practically impossible.

It seems that the ball is in the court of the women in moderate political parties. Have they become strong enough to persuade their male party leaderships that the way to renew lost trust of the voters is through serious work for real equality between men and women? In the USA, the women's movement seems to be vocal enough, while things seem much bleaker in the EU. They appear even worse on the periphery, at least when it comes to institutionalized politics. A few of the weakened social-democrat parties in the SEE are showing signs of becoming serious with regard to gender equality issues, but only time will show if this is not too little, too late. Progressive responses should not be opportunistic, catering to public opinion polls. The responses need to be bold, assume leadership, and pledge commitment with gender differentiated approaches. A broader political project is needed – a project of more solidarity in more equal and more inclusive societies.

The Equality Paradigm Exposed: Why Emancipatory Politics Came Under Fire and What We Can Do About It¹

Eszter Kováts

When we are faced with fierce opposition to what the Right presents as the threat of “gender ideology” or “cultural Marxism” or “the dictatorship of political correctness”, it is not enough to say they misunderstand gender equality. It is not even enough to say that this homogenizing discourse, consciously ignoring debates within and among feminist and LGBT activism and academia, is a mere political mobilization strategy and a pretext for being able to reject progressive legislation (e.g. ratifying the Istanbul Convention). While all this is partly true, this does not account for the full scope of the phenomenon: we need to look beyond what is attacked at the surface in order to understand what is at stake.

“If gender quota is necessary for party lists, what if I identify as a woman, can I run for a woman’s place then? And what happens if I identify as one of those other genders?”

This question was posed to me by a male right-wing politician recently. With this, we embarked on one of the favourite topics of the Right when it comes to women’s rights and gender equality. The contradiction presented by the politician points to the fact that the gender definition of the policy of quota differs from the one which includes trans and genderqueer people’s political claims. And this is just one of the issues which makes it hard to fully grasp opposition to gender equality politics in many countries.

Equality Politics Under Fire

In recent years, numerous countries across the globe have witnessed the emergence of powerful social movements mobilizing against an enemy known as ‘gender ideology’, and ‘cultural Marxism’, in much of the Western world, ‘Gayropa’ in post-Soviet countries or ‘political correctness’ in the American context. These movements have successfully mobilized people against various human rights and equality issues such as women’s reproductive rights, LGBT issues, gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming, sexual education, gender studies as an academic field, and political correctness.

Because of the centrality of the concepts of gender and equality to these illiberal movements pushing for a paradigm shift, many political commentators treated them as a problem in itself; understanding such rhetoric as a backlash against emancipatory politics, a mobilization of fundamentalists against the achievements of feminism and sexual minority rights. However, the situation seems more complicated than this. In what follows I will list some (but certainly not all) factors which could contribute to the opposition to the equality paradigm.

Different Gender Definitions ‘Out There’

The simultaneity of the movements, the different triggers in countries that differ with respect to political landscape as well as gender and LGBT policies indicates that, rather than dealing with isolated cases, we are witnessing a transnational phenomenon. There is a growing scholarship on these movements and two of the main scholars of the field, Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte remind us that “‘gender ideology’ does not designate gender studies, but is a term initially created to oppose women’s and LGBT rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality (...) it regards gender as the ideological matrix of a set

1 The parts Equality politics under fire and Gender as symbolic glue of this article are quotes from a piece written with Andrea Pető and Weronika Grzebalska. The part on the limits of the human rights paradigm is an edited quote from the author’s Preface to “The Future of the European Union – Feminist Perspectives from East-Central Europe”; http://fesbp.hu/common/pdf/The_Future_of_the_EU.pdf.

of abhorred ethical and social reforms, namely sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, protection against gender violence and others.”²

The controversy around *gender* is even more complicated as there are different gender definitions in use in policy-making and in social justice activism, born in different times and on different ideological base, partly disconnected from debates within gender studies, and partly contradicting each other.

First, in the English speaking context *gender* became widely a substitute of biological sex (e.g. in the cases when we speak about gender quotas or gender pay gap, what is meant is male-female ratio). Second, it came to mean women, e.g. gender analysis in policy-making is often used to describe how this or that measure would affect women (and less, as intended, gender relations). Third, it is an analytical category to describe the social quality of distinctions based on sex, the power structures in a given society between men and women, and the roles, possibilities and constraints in society, assigned on being born male or female (e.g. if we speak about gender-based violence, it refers to the gendered nature of a specific type of violence, rooted in the prevailing patriarchal structure of our societies). Fourth, many use it in the trans and genderqueer activism to mean gender identity³ (a person's felt sense of identity and expression, meaning identifying or not with being born male or female).

It is unsurprising that people not acquainted with social justice activism and gender policy, not to mention with abstract debates in gender studies, cannot make a sense of ‘what gender really is’. This ambiguity makes the term vulnerable to who are less interested in disentangling complexities and more in creating a homogeneous *other* in the groups of feminists, LGBT activists, gender studies scholars, liberal, green, and left-wing politicians.

Gender as Symbolic Glue

“Gender ideology”, “cultural Marxism,” and “political correctness” have come to signify everything that is perceived as wrong with the current state of politics. In order to understand this phenomenon, and to highlight the crucial role played by gender politics in the current paradigm change, Weronika Grzebalska, Andrea Pető and myself have introduced the notion of gender as ‘symbolic glue’⁴:

“Firstly, in constructing a dynamic within which the notion of ‘gender’ is perceived as a threatening concept the right has united separate contested issues attributed to the progressive agenda under one umbrella term. ‘Gender ideology’ has come to signify the failure of democratic representation, and opposition to this ideology has become a means of rejecting different facets of the current socioeconomic order, from the prioritization of identity politics over material issues, and the weakening of people’s social, cultural and political security⁵, to the detachment of social and political elites and the influence of transnational institutions and the global economy on nation states.

Secondly, the demonization of ‘gender ideology’ has become a key rhetorical tool in the construction of a new conception of ‘common sense’ for a wide audience; a form of consensus about what is normal and legitimate. It is important to note that social mobilization which is based on an opposition to ‘gender ideology’ and political correctness does not just demonize the worldview of their adversaries, and reject the human rights paradigm which has long been the object of relative consensus in Europe and North America. Instead, they offer a liveable and viable alternative centred on family, nation, religious

2 Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe. Mobilizing against Equality* (Rowman & Littlefield: London & New York, 2017) p. 5.

3 <https://aeon.co/essays/the-idea-that-gender-is-a-spectrum-is-a-new-gender-prison>.

4 <http://politicalcritique.org/long-read/2017/gender-as-symbolic-glue-how-gender-became-an-umbrella-term-for-the-rejection-of-the-neoliberal-order/>.

5 <http://visegradinsight.eu/why-the-war-on-gender-ideology-matters-and-not-just-to-feminists/>.

values and freedom of speech, one which is attractive because it rests on a positive identification of an individual's own choice, and one that promises a safe and secure community as a remedy to individualism and atomization.

Thirdly, opposition to 'gender politics' and 'cultural Marxism' has also allowed the Right to create broad alliances and unite various actors that have not, necessarily, been eager to cooperate in the past: different Christian Churches, orthodox Jews, fundamentalist Muslims, mainstream conservatives, far right parties, fundamentalist groups and in some countries even football hooligans."⁶

No Linear Liberal Progress

The extent to which liberal ideas have become entrenched in the value-laden notion of linear progress is especially problematic today, when the lived experience of precariousness and insecurity continue to contradict this promise. This position also carries the risk of the binary classification of people as being on the right or wrong side of history, creating false dichotomies⁷ (either *for* or *against* equality). Often it is presented as if tolerance and acceptance (which have recently come to mean the same thing) would be a spectrum – as if one could draw a line of progress, leading from sheer homophobia/misogyny towards mature attitudes of acknowledging equality.

This idea completely lacks a reflection on the material dimensions of inequalities as well as on the embeddedness of the terms and goals of the equality paradigm in the global power order. In case of East-Central Europe one can for instance mention the import of activism from the core countries in the field of human rights after the regime change and how it is articulated today in so-called progressive activism⁸. Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons remind us that "gay liberation will not follow a predetermined trajectory in which each country has a 'Stonewall moment', creates gay districts and eventually legalizes gay marriage."⁹ Therefore the idea of a necessary liberal progress should be used very carefully if at all. Not only the dichotomy of progressives vs. conservatives (based on this idea of liberal progress) is false but it has been exploited by the Right¹⁰ more successfully than by so-called progressive actors.

Inflation of Terms and the Limits of the Human Rights Paradigm

In the last years, the term populism has gained enormously in popularity beyond the academic literature, and this has intensified even more since the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election. There is virtually not a politician who has not been labelled populist at one time, because most people use the term to defame a political opponent. Chantal Mouffe calls this phenomenon "anti-populist hysteria"¹¹. This tendency to dismiss views deviating from the supposed/desired liberal consensus as populist is similar to the overuse of the terms misogynistic, homophobic, racist and so on, in the name of human rights. It is all the more complicated as right-wing actors in many countries use women's rights and gay rights as a weapon against migrants and refugees (Jasbir Puar's concept of homonationalism, and Sara Farris' concept of femonationalism).

The human rights consensus which formed the basis of the post-WWII order in the West, is another notion questioned by the forces mobilizing against "gender ideology". The respect of human rights of each human being should be beyond question, and in times of increasing attacks this must be always

6 Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts, and Andrea Pető, *Gender as symbolic glue: how 'gender' became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order* (2017); <http://politicalcritique.org/long-read/2017/gender-as-symbolic-glue-how-gender-became-an-umbrella-term-for-the-rejection-of-the-neoliberal-order/>.

7 <http://politicalcritique.org/cee/hungary/2016/culture-wars-and-reality-questions-on-demographic-policy/>.

8 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/orsolya-bajusz-dalma-fer/virtue-signalling-as-route-to-social-status-instances-fr>.

9 Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons, *Queer Wars. The New Global Polarization over Gay Rights* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2017), p. 134.

10 <https://theconversation.com/how-hungary-and-poland-have-silenced-women-and-stifled-human-rights-66743>.

11 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/democraciabiarta/chantal-mouffe/populist-challenge>.

emphasized. Still, we have to keep in mind the challenge posed by the fact what the human rights paradigm is in package with.

The paradigm of human rights focuses on individual rights and views the economic order as an independent social sub-system. It also disconnects the persisting privileges of men against women from its political-economical embeddedness. That is, *how* the hierarchical relations between men and women are reproduced in today's societies, e.g. reproductive work being an invisible (and invisibilized) precondition of so-called productive work (work done at the labour market). Also, it obfuscates the fact that there may be contradictions among various human rights claims (for example between gay rights advocates and women's organisations concerning surrogacy). Thirdly: there are more and more things brought under the umbrella of human rights — and as soon as it happens, the given phenomenon is morally unquestionable. That is how, concerning the topic of prostitution — which has been subject to debate among feminists up to this day — the representatives of the sex work approach (who see the problem in stigmatization) refer to human rights and try to present the standpoint that sees prostitution as the exploitation of women's bodies and therefore a phenomenon to be eliminated as illegitimate and exclusionary. In many countries, activists that interpret gender as an inner essence see the recognition of their gender identity (independently of embodiment, identifying as a man, or a woman or non-binary) as a human right, hence indisputable.

Human Dignity in Material Terms

Culturalising explanations about the popularity of this or that right-wing party, candidate or movement among people (e.g. saying that those who favour them would hold traditionalist views about men and women) overlook the complexity behind such sympathies. I listed some of them above. The importance of the material aspect can be further exemplified by the popularity of the Polish Law and Justice party among women, which opposes reproductive rights but it is the first Polish political party since 1989 to significantly expand the welfare state and the alleviation of poverty is already measurable, following its generous family policy. As sociologist Weronika Grzebalska puts it¹²: "It is the only party that valorizes care work; respect for motherhood, even rhetorically, is more than what the labor market frequently offers." The Right recognizes and explores failures of the so-called progressive actors in the field of global and class inequalities. Therefore it is not enough to plea for more recognition of women's human rights, but other crucial questions need to be asked and answered: what is the definition of work and what should it be? How much worth is care in our society (beyond division of labour within the family)? What is the relation of productive work to care (beyond *work-life balance*)? What is the global economic order, which contributes to the reproduction of unequal attitudes and time use patterns?

Conclusion

These right-wing movements are not necessarily anti-feminist and homophobic *per se*, even though they undoubtedly fight the terms in which equality is defined by so-called progressive actors: anti-discrimination language, human rights paradigm, statistical equality and individualizing identity politics. All these described processes need to be looked at more thoroughly. Reflection on "how we got here" and on the share of responsibility of the actors invested in human rights and social justice is not capitulation to the Right. It is the prerequisite to be able to provide better answers to the crises uncovered and the weaknesses exposed.

12 <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/memory-keepers>.

The background of the entire page is a blue-tinted photograph. It shows a concrete wall with a dove in flight in the upper left. In the lower right, there is a large, stylized peace symbol graffiti. The symbol is filled with various patterns: horizontal lines, vertical lines, and a floral-like design. The dove is also stylized, with its wings spread. The overall tone is serious and thematic, related to peace and conflict.

POLITICAL TRENDS & DYNAMICS

OVERVIEW

THE AIM OF THIS SECTION IS TO BROADEN THE DISCOURSE ON PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE AND TO PROVIDE ANALYSIS THAT INVOLVES A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SECURITY, INCLUDING STRUCTURAL SOURCES OF CONFLICT. THE BRIEFINGS COVER FOURTEEN COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: THE SEVEN POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES AND ALBANIA, GREECE, TURKEY, CYPRUS, BULGARIA, ROMANIA, AND MOLDOVA.

KOSOVO'S GHOSTS

The new year has not made the best of starts. No sooner had the dual Christmas (and in some parts dual New Year's Eve) celebrations come to a close than much of the region woke up on January 16 to news of a political assassination. In the morning hours of that day, unknown assassins fired several shots at Oliver Ivanovic, a moderate Kosovo Serb politician from the town of Mitrovica in north Kosovo, outside of his political party's offices.

Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic called the murder a terrorist act. Yet to many the murder seemed more like a political assassination, generating a nasty sense of *déjà vu*. South-East Europe – Kosovo and Serbia in particular – have no shortage of political assassinations in the recent (or indeed more distant) past. However, most observers and ordinary citizens had thought that such ways of settling political scores in the region were, indeed, firmly a thing of the past. The assassination of Ivanovic has shaken this belief, which is perhaps what makes it doubly disturbing.

People gather at the office, where Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic was killed, in northern town of Mitrovica, Kosovo



Who Ivanovic's assassins might be has still not been revealed. The Kosovar and Serbian law enforcement agencies have launched their own investigations and Kosovo's Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj even floated the idea of calling in the FBI. Yet despite this, many observers remain sceptical that the assassins will ever be identified. While some in Serbia were quick in

portraying the murder as ethnically motivated, politicians and observers – including other local Kosovo Serb politicians – seemed to suggest that the assassination was more likely to have been ordered by powerful criminal circles with links to politics from within northern Kosovo.

Exactly how far-reaching the consequences of this political murder will be remains to be seen. For the time being, Belgrade has put the EU-mediated dialogue with Pristina on hold. Some Serbian officials have vowed that the dialogue will not be resumed until Ivanovic's murderers are found. In reality, there seems little likelihood of this, as Ivanovic's killers may well not be found any time soon, while the international community seems in no mood to allow an indefinite suspension of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia.

A woman lights a candle where Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanovic was killed in northern town of Mitrovica, Kosovo



Nor was this the only turbulent development facing Kosovo over the holiday period. With the long-awaited Hague-based Specialist Chambers for trying crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) seemingly set to issue its first indictments in the very near future, a motion was submitted to the Kosovo Assembly signed by 43 (out of 120) of its members calling for the legislation which allows the Court to operate to be revoked. This sudden turn of events generated sharp rebukes from the international community, which warned of grave consequences if Kosovo's Assembly went down this path. Another attempt to have the relevant laws revoked failed on January 17.

However, attempts to abolish the legislation permitting the Court's work have still not gone away. Moreover, tensions remain high in Kosovo as the first indictments are anxiously awaited. Daut Haradinaj, a former KLA fighter and brother of Kosovo's PM Ramush Haradinaj warned of a backlash from KLA veterans against any arrests related to the Court's future indictments.

ELECTIONS

Both sides of the divided island of Cyprus saw elections in January. On 7th January, Turkish-dominated norther Cyprus held Parliamentary elections in which the right-wing National Unity Party emerged victorious with 21 seats and is likely to lead a renewed coalition of parties from the right of the political spectrum. Meanwhile, Cypriot voters in the internationally-recognized Republic of Cyprus went to the polls at the end of January to elect a new president. Incumbent Nicos Anastasiades emerged as the winner of the first round, gaining 35 per cent of the votes cast but failing to reach the 50 per cent threshold necessary to be elected in the first round. He will now enter a second round run-off with the runner up of the first round, Stavros Malas, an independent backed by the leftist AKEL party. The election, held on 28th January, was marked by increased voter abstention – although still high, the 72 per cent turnout was still ten points lower than that in 2018. Nevertheless, the fact that both candidates who will be going into the second round favour a continuation of recent efforts to reunite the divided island is seen as an encouraging sign by most observers.

On January 19, the Speaker of the Montenegrin Parliament, Ivan Brajovic, set the date of his country's presidential elections for April 15, 2018. Perhaps more interesting than this is the intense speculation in Montenegro that the country's veteran leader Milo Djukanovic may come out of his formal retirement to run for president yet again.

Bosnia, too, is gearing up for national elections, expected in October. In most countries, an election that was ten months away would perhaps not merit much attention at the beginning of the year, yet in Bosnia the long campaign ahead of each election begins long before election day it-

self. Yet without amendments to the election law itself, it remains uncertain whether the House of Peoples, the upper chamber of Bosnia's central-level Parliament as well as a chamber of the Federation entity's Parliament, can be constituted.

After much speculation regarding whether Serbia would go to another Parliamentary election in the spring of 2018, the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has decided against this idea. However, the election date has been set for the City of Belgrade's local government, with March 4 chosen. The election is seen as a key test of the support for the ruling SNS in the country's capital, with many observers arguing that the opposition has a strong chance of challenging – perhaps even unseating – the ruling party. The conduct of the election will be another key element to watch – local elections held on December 24 in five local municipalities were marred by incidents of violence and intimidation directed at opposition activists.

GOVERNMENT INSTABILITY

Romania faced yet another government crisis over the last month. Having dismissed their own Prime Minister – Sorin Grindeanu – in June 2017, the ruling Social Democrats forced the resignation of his replacement, Mihai Tudose, on January 15. Yet again, the reason for the removal of the Prime Minister were disagreements between party leader Liviu Dragnea and Tudose over the (re)composition of the government. As in the past, Dragnea prevailed. Romania now appears set to get its first female Prime Minister – on January 17, Romania's President Klaus Iohannis accepted the nomination of Viorica Dancila, a Social Democrat MEP, for the post of Prime Minister by her party. A new government is expected to be installed in Bucharest by the beginning of February.

Neighbouring Moldova also saw a government reshuffle in December 2017, with seven new members being added and only four ministers keeping their posts. Yet unlike in Romania, the changes are not the result of any political crisis, but the seeming desire of the ruling Democratic Party of Moldova to improve its image ahead of Parliamentary elections due at the end of 2018, as well as in the eyes of Brussels.

EU

In January, Bulgaria kicked off its six month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The country's government had hoped to use the Bulgarian Presidency to promote Bulgaria and improve the country's negative image. While Bulgaria has certainly come into the spotlight, this has not helped to improve the country's image. On the contrary, European media have yet again placed the spotlight on the Balkan country's problems with corruption, organized crime and poverty.

Bulgaria's Prime Minister Boyko Borisov speaks during the ceremony as part of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU



Among other things, Bulgaria hopes to champion the cause of Western Balkan EU enlargement during its six month Presidency. Quite whether Bulgaria is the best advocate for EU hopefuls in the Western Balkans is dubious at best. However, in February, the European Commission is due to unveil a new enlargement strategy focused on Montenegro and Serbia, the two current front runners, which, according to leaked information, seems set to float 2025 as a potential moment for the accession of these two countries. Doubtless, the new strategy will also list all the daunting work which they will need to complete by then in order to be ready to join.

On February 6, the European Commission launched its new enlargement strategy, primarily aimed at the countries of the Western Balkans. Having been on the margins of the Com-

Opinion

Instead of using its first EU Presidency to direct the public discourse towards future-relevant issues such as youth and digitalization, public debate in Bulgaria is riddled with paranoid disputes on national identity, sexual mores, and the limits of tolerance.

The bone of contention is the European Council's 2011 Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Salient in Bulgaria, where a study by the Center for the Study of Democracy in 2014 found that a third of Bulgaria's society is victim to domestic violence, particularly in the Roma population.

Vice Prime Minister Karakachanov described the text of the Convention as "scandalous," as promoting "homosexuality and transsexuality in schools," with which international stakeholders want to "force" Bulgaria into introducing a third gender.

The ratification of the Convention was meant to be prepared in the first cabinet session this year but was voted against by eight ruling coalition ministers. Bulgaria's Socialist Party, surprisingly, distanced itself from the Convention despite previously supporting it, along with PES.

This was followed by a campaign by far-right "Patriots" with a strong media presence. They took issue with the term "gender" as a social construct instead of "sex" as the biological gender. To most Bulgarians, gender as a social role sounds awkward in the best case and suspicious in the worst.

This controversy has a firm hold over Bulgaria: 62 per cent of Bulgarians are against passing the Convention. The struggle against domestic violence could be lost in political calculations. Meanwhile, neighbours are taking note. Croatia's President Grabar-Kitarović, who advocated for the Convention, pleaded only to implement those aspects which would not cause "public controversy."

Dr. Helene Kortländer
Director, FES Bulgaria

missions long agenda over the last few years, enlargement appears to be coming back in from the cold. That, at least, is the message which the Commission is trying to send with the new en-



Jean Claude Juncker, Boyko Borisov, Donald Tusk, Rumen Radev, Antonio Tajani and Tsveta Karayancheva attend the ceremony as part of the Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU

largement strategy, which is both an attempt to breathe more life into the process, as well as boost the credibility of the promise of membership for the Western Balkan countries. The new strategy correctly identifies the problems plaguing the region and spells out what the countries of the region need to do in order to become members of the European club. In this sense, the new strategy is also a carefully calibrated attempt to dispel the idea that some countries might be let into the EU even if they do not meet the necessary criteria particularly if, like Serbia, they have a political bargaining chip up their sleeve (specifically, the Kosovo issue). Of course, this message is not intended just for Western Balkan ears but also those of the more enlargement-sceptic EU member states, who need convincing that the Commission is still serious about demanding that future accession countries really do meet key standards such as those relating to rule of law and fighting corruption.

DEMOCRACY AND MEDIA FREEDOM

Across the region, news stories suggesting deterioration in democratic and media freedoms trickled in. A new report published by Freedom House – Freedom in the World in 2018 – did not carry much good news from South East Europe. The most dramatic change was visible in the case of Turkey, which finally slid into the ‘not free’ category of countries. As the report notes, the country’s freedom score has been in free-fall

since 2014, when President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, began a campaign to impose personalized control over the country’s political system. A further six countries in the region – Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova and Montenegro – all fall into the ‘partly free’ category. Serbia, while still in the free category, was perceived to be on a downward trend.

Other signs that the region was sliding in a more authoritarian direction abounded. Ahead of a visit by a delegation of European media organizations, Croatian journalists complained of pressures on independent media, as well as the independence of public broadcaster HRT. In late December, Montenegrin journalists and civil society activists took to the streets to protest growing political pressure on their country’s public broadcaster, RTCG. A trend of increasing attacks and pressure on investigative journalists was also noted in Bulgaria at the end of 2017.

CORRUPTION V THE RULE OF LAW

As ever, corruption and problems regarding the rule of law were present across the region during the turn of the year.

Romania seemed to attract the greatest amount of attention on this front. In December, the country passed changes to the Criminal Code which were bitterly opposed by prosecutors, judges, legal experts and much of the public. Critics argued that the changes to the Criminal Code would all but shut down investigations related to organized crime and corruption. Amidst this, the country’s Judicial Inspectorate announced that it had launched a misconduct investigation into the country’s much-praised anti-corruption Chief Prosecutor Laura Codruta Kovesi. Meanwhile, a report published by the Council of Europe at the beginning of this year criticized the country’s lack of progress in fighting corruption.

Neighbouring Serbia also saw holiday-related corruption scandals, as media revealed the huge sums of money spent by the Belgrade City authorities on Christmas decorations around the city. Perhaps most shocking was a contract for an 83,000 euros plastic Christmas tree, which

authorities later claimed to have cancelled. Yet more troubling were certain institutional changes, real or expected. Investigative journalists from BIRN revealed that the newly-appointed head of the country's Anti-Corruption Agency had been a donor and local election candidate of the ruling SNS in 2016, bringing his independence into doubt. Meanwhile, with the government set to unveil proposed constitutional changes which, in theory, should help increase judicial independence, many judges and prosecutors expressed their fears that the proposals could be used to actually reduce judicial independence.

In Albania, the Independent Qualification Commission – a body established in order to vet appointments within the judicial system as part of wider rule of law reforms – began its work in November. While hailed as a positive development, media warned that the Commission's work was shrouded in secrecy, something which could undermine trust in it.

(PARLIAMENTARY) PROTESTS

Parliamentary protests and boycotts appear to be becoming a fixture of Balkan politics in addition to all manner of routine civic protests.

In Tirana, opposition MPs set off smoke bombs in Parliament in a failed attempt to block the election of a temporary Prosecutor-General in December. The Parliament was also the scene of scuffles between MPs from the ruling majority and the opposition. Outside Parliament, opposition demonstrators clashed with police.

Next door, in Kosovo, a local court found four MPs from the Self-determination movement guilty of setting off tear gas in Kosovo's Parliament during 2015. The MPs set off the tear gas in an attempt to block the passage of a controversial border demarcation agreement between Kosovo and Montenegro. Given that the MPs received conditional sentences, they will not be sent to prison, unless they commit the same act again over the next two years.

Bucharest saw yet more protests by ordinary citizens against corruption and weak rule of law. Amidst freezing temperatures, the latest pro-

test on January 20 attracted thousands of demonstrators, many of whom had travelled from other parts of the country to attend. Protest demands were directed against the recent changes to the Criminal Code in particular.

People participate in the Women's March rally on January 20, 2018 in Athens, Greece



Bulgarians also took to the streets over a number of issues in January. Indeed, the beginning of Bulgaria's Presidency of the EU Council occurred amidst protests by numerous local groups, such as police unions, seeking to exploit Bulgaria's moment in the international spotlight to draw attention to their own causes and problems. Aside from socio-economic problems, green issues also sparked demonstrations, as thousands came out onto the streets of Sofia on January 4 to protest against a planned expansion of a ski resort in the Pirin National Park. In another corner of the country, demonstrators supporting the ski development gathered at a counter-protest against what they called the 'green parasites'.

Tensions in Turkish-run northern Cyprus remain elevated after pro-Erdogan nationalist demonstrators attacked the offices of the Afrika newspaper on 22nd January. The newspaper had published a front-page story critical of Turkey's ongoing military operation in northern Syria, provoking a rebuke from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who called on his 'brothers' in northern Cyprus to 'respond'. The attack provoked much larger protests by moderate, secular northern-Cypriot Turks on the day of the at-

tack as well as later in the week against Ankara's heavy-handed treatment of Turkish-run northern Cyprus.

BILATERAL DISPUTES

Macedonia was one of the few countries in the region which continued to generate positive news regarding its relations with neighbouring countries. During the course of January, the Macedonian and Bulgarian parliaments ratified a friendship treaty signed between the leaders of the two countries in 2017. Positive signals continued to emerge regarding the possibility of Greece and Macedonia finally resolving their dispute over the latter's name. Cautious optimism that a resolution to the dispute could be found by the middle of 2018, unblocking Macedonia's EU and NATO accession process, continued to grow.

Meanwhile, relations between Hungary and Romania were strained by calls for greater autonomy for ethnic Hungarians in Romania's Transylvania region. The demands came from Romania's Hungarian community itself, with the three main political parties representing the community launching a joint demand for territorial, local and cultural autonomy on January 8. Coming ahead of the centenary of Transylvania's union with Romania, the demands have been met with hostility by Romanian politicians and officials, particularly after it was revealed that the declaration had been mediated by an envoy of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Relations between Bosnia and Russia became strained on the economic front after Moscow again suspended apple imports from Bosnia over suspicions that the country's exporters had been repackaging Polish apples as Bosnian. Meanwhile, Georgia protested to Bosnia against the presence of Antoly Bibilov, the President of its breakaway region of South Ossetia, at the 'statehood day' celebrations of Bosnia's Republika Srpska entity.

In a sign of the warm relations between Belgrade and Moscow, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic sealed his December 19 visit to Moscow with a new energy deal, which will allow Serbia to re-export Russian gas. Numerous warm words were

exchanged, with Vucic thanking Russian President Vladimir Putin for his country's continued support for Serbia over Kosovo and wishing him success in the upcoming Russian presidential elections. The same day, Serbia sided with Russia in a UN General Assembly vote over a motion tabled by Ukraine condemning the human rights situation in Crimea and referring to Russia as an 'occupying power'.

Relations between Croatia and Slovenia remained sour over their disputed border in the Piran Gulf. From December 29 Slovenia began implementing the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which had six months earlier awarded 80 per cent of the waters of the disputed Gulf to Slovenia. With Croatian fishermen fearing that they could be stopped and fined for fishing in waters until recently controlled by Croatia, the Croatian police offered to provide escorts to their fishermen as of January 2018.

SECURITY

An investigation published by BIRN in early January 2018 flagged up interesting links between Islamist radicals in the Balkans and Europe. According to the report, terrorism trials across the Balkans have highlighted the fact that many radicals in the Balkans were either originally indoctrinated in radical Islamist hubs across Europe – particularly Austria, Germany and Italy – or had maintained contacts with these hubs. Perhaps not surprisingly, radical links overlapped with diaspora links, with Bosniaks from the region being oriented more towards Austria while Albanian radicals were more likely to maintain ties to Islamist centres in Italy.

At the other end of the region, Turkey became more actively embroiled in the conflict which has attracted, and indeed helped fuel, many of the Islamic radicals in the Balkans. On January 20, Turkish troops began ground operations in northern Syria, in the area around the town of Afrin. The stated goal of the Turkish military and its local allies in northern Syria is to push back Kurdish militants from the Turkish border and establish a 30km deep 'safe zone' inside Syrian territory. The international community called for restraint on Turkey's part.

Featured Interviews: Women in Politics, a Generational Glance

For our featured interviews, we approached two women who entered politics at different times – a young woman and activist from Macedonia, Ivana Jordanovska, and Anna Karamanou, who entered Greek politics in the 1970s. Their views on gender equality and their experiences and careers offer a generational glance at women's role in politics in SEE.

Ivana Jordanovska, Member of Foreign Policy Department, Government of Macedonia

FES: In your opinion, how much power do women in politics in SEE have? Are there enough women in positions of power/decision-making?

Jordanovska: Not enough. In general, women in southeastern Europe are yet to achieve serious political weight, as unique and distinct political representatives. Just look at the composition of any crisis-solving group: it's the men that are called upon to sit around a table and hammer out political steps. However, once these steps are to be implemented, we are seeing more and more often women being called in to make things happen. So, the fame goes to the men, and the hard work is done by the women. This is problematic because politics is rarely a purely merit-based sport. Media has a huge role in this. Turn to any TV station in the region, and count the number of political talk shows that feature only men. Even better, count the ones that have an equal number of men and women.

As for the numbers, there are more women in decision-making posts than there used to be. However, we mustn't be satisfied by this. Many key political posts in all of these countries have never been filled by women. There's a pattern of the type of ministries that are usually headed by women, like labour or culture. Once, a brilliant woman told me: "You'll never see women where the money is". And this rings true. Can you think of a female Minister of Finance?

On the other hand, there are some positive examples to be noted. Radmila Sekerinska, the Minister of Defense of Macedonia is an excellent example. She's heading a ministry that is rarely considered within the domain of "female" politics, as seen in our societies. Plus, she is a veteran of Macedonian politics. If you look at the average years of active involvement of men and women in politics in SEE, you'll see that women

have much shorter spans. This is a problem because it means they rarely make it into the final rounds for the most prestigious spots.

FES: What has been your experience working in politics and policy as a younger woman?

Jordanovska: I am lucky to be currently working for this Government and a Prime Minister that strongly supports gender equality, including in politics. Mr. Zaev is the first one to support and stand behind the feminist policies proposed by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mila Carovska. And having Ms. Carovska, a vowed feminist in charge of this Ministry, speaks volumes. As party president, he supported all the women who ran for mayor in the past elections. So, Bitola, one of the bigger cities in Macedonia, got a woman mayor for the first time. In Makedonska Kamenica a single mother was elected mayor. And in Aracinovo, a predominantly Albanian municipality received its first woman mayor, an Albanian running as part of the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM). The effect of these elections might be invisible in the present, but it will have a huge impact in the future.

On the other hand, obstacles for young women in politics are still numerous. Throughout my work experience, I've had numerous negative episodes that men in politics rarely or never encounter. I've been told I'm bitchy when I fight for a policy. Talking about my work makes me a "vain" self-promoter, while it's acceptable for my male colleagues to do the same. There's no way to win when it comes to the simplest things, like apparel. Wearing a suit makes you too masculine, but wearing a dress makes you flirty, which automatically makes you less serious. Having a boyfriend makes you an unreliable colleague since you might decide to marry and have kids, or move away.

It is my strong belief, and I am prepared to fight for this any day of the week, that the only way to put an end to this treatment of women is to get more women in politics. So, in a way, I see my stubbornness to persist as my duty to the next generation of women. I'm sure my generation won't destroy every form of misogyny, but we can make it a bit easier, just the way the generation of Ms. Sekerinska made it easier for us. Plus, you know how the saying goes: "Fighting a misogynist a day keeps insanity away".

FES: What do you think the role of socio-democratic parties in the region is in regards to gender equality?

Jordanovksa: I think that socio-democratic parties have been at the forefront of gender equality across Europe, but also in the region. If history is to teach us anything, I think that we can expect that future governments in the region which are formed by socio-democratic parties will make important moves towards gender equality. If we are to remain true to our values, we must continue to break glass ceilings for women across the board.

The ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the parliament of Macedonia is a great example. The new parliamentary majority ratified the convention in the first 6 months of its mandate. This opens up the opportunity for modifying key laws in the country, for example, the Criminal law. So far, rape has been defined as an act under threat of violence or violence itself. We hope that by the end of 2018, rape will be defined as lack of consent. We still have a long way to go, but the journey is much easier when travelled alongside people who believe in equality and solidarity.

FES: Do you see a connection between Euro-Atlantic integration and gender equality?

Jordanovksa: I don't think that we should believe that Euro-Atlantic integration will magically dissolve our problems. The steps that need to be taken, in regards to policies and awareness-raising, must be done within the country. Greater exchange of people and ideas could potentially lead to awareness-raising, but we must be aware that serious extreme right wing initiatives hope to curb women's rights in some parts of the EU. So, I wouldn't say that greater gender equality is guaranteed in the EU, or NATO. We must do our own work, in our own countries.

FES: What needs to happen to attain full gender equality in the EU? Where do you see such changes being made?

Jordanovksa: Again, a lot has to be done within the member states. I strongly believe that the brightest future for the EU lies in European federalism, where decisions are made according to the principle of subsidiarity. In this case, legislation in this area done at the level of the EU would have to be predominantly instructive, rather than directive. And the legislative bodies at the lower levels will have to develop the legislation to accomplish these instructions.

As for the awareness-raising, I think that a lot can be done through Pan-European actions and solidarity. Just look at the example of Poland: so many women across Europe, at least virtually supported the struggle of the Polish women for maintaining their freedom over reproductive health decisions.

The European Parliament, the EC and media at the EU level could lead by example, which happens even now to an extent. By talking about issues of gender equality and women's rights, they could turn the attention of the public towards issues that are rarely discussed. However, this has to be understood as a goal for all of us, regardless of our gender or work position. We must all commit to doing more, and doing better.

**Anna Karamanou, PhD, Vice President of the Political Association of Greek Women,
Former President of the European Parliament Committee**

FES: In your opinion, how much power do women in politics have? Are there enough women in positions of power/decision-making?

Karamanou: There will never be enough women in politics and positions of power, as long as the natural 50/50 gender balance is not achieved in all democratic institutions and decision-making process. The representation of women in government (central and local), high public posts and positions of power remains low, placing Greece at the bottom among the members of EU. The results of the September 2015 parliamentary elections show 54 women elected out of 300 seats in parliament (18%). At the last local elections of 2014, the results were even more disappointing. Only 15 women mayors were elected out of a total of 325 and only two women region governors, in totally 13 administrative regions. The case of the municipality of Athens is a worth mentioning exception, since a gender balance is applied at all levels: The president of the Municipal Council is female, as well as half of the 10 vice-mayors and half of the municipality Council.

Greece ranks also very low in terms of gender empowerment: 78th, worldwide, among 142 countries, according to the classification of the World Economic Forum (2017 ranking). At the same time, neighboring countries of SEE have achieved better gender balance results: Albania 38th, FYROM 67th, Bulgaria 18th, Bosnia & Herzegovina 66th, Serbia 40th. It is evident that their European aspirations have contributed to extensive reforms and promotion of gender equality in all areas. Only Turkey is very low, occupying the 131th position.

Political participation of women, in Greece, does not follow the progress achieved in other areas. It is noteworthy, that women make the 60 per cent of the university students, also in postgraduate studies and we can observe their dynamic breakthrough in all scientific and research areas. In the judiciary make 75 per cent of the newcomers and many women occupy top positions. Employed women are highly qualified. For first time in history women are more educated than men. However, this has not reduced the gen-

der pay gap. It is worth mentioning that women also show a great interest in art. The high majority of those attending theatrical performances, concerts and events of culture, in general, are women. This is a fact confirming women's rising role in public sphere.

FES: How have things changed since you entered politics, for you, for female politicians, and for women in general? Do you see positive or negative trends? How has EU accession influenced gender equality in the region?

Karamanou: Things are certainly changing. Slowly, but steadily. When I entered politics in the 70s, after the fall of dictatorship in 1974, the situation of women was deplorable. I joined PASOK (the social democratic party), which was the only party to include in its declaration women's rights and gender equality. In 1977, I was elected member of the Central Committee with another 3 women (among them Melina Merkouri and Vasso Papan-dreou, the former EU commissioner). Only 4 women, out of 60 members, were elected to the C.C.! My personal ambition, at that period, was to devote my time and my energy contributing to the efforts of consolidating democracy and promote my country's social and economic development. Actually, I rejected any proposal to run for parliament, apparently, because my self-confidence was very low and heavily influenced by the patriarchal culture, underestimation of women and men's supposed superiority! I was self-discriminated! Thus, I became active in the party politics, the trade unions, and the feminist movement, while I was working in the telecommunications sector, also studying at the Athens University and having a child. An exciting life! It took me 23 years of hard party and grassroots work before applying and being selected to stand for the European Parliament.

Few women joined the political parties. At the first general elections, right after 7 years of dictatorship, in autumn of 1974, only 7 women were elected to a parliament of 300 deputies. The new constitution of 1975, stated, for first time, that "Greek men and women enjoy equal rights and equal responsibilities." It was a great

*"Feminism
and democracy
are urgently needed
in a world that is not
working, is dangerously
out of control, and is
losing a sense of what
means to be
human."*

change! At that period, women's NGOs, which had been abolished by the colonels, re-emerged and became very active players. In 1976, Margarita Papandreou set up the Union of Greek Women (EGE), which was doomed to play an important role in raising women's awareness, organising women locally, all over Greece, and simultaneously exercising pressure upon the government to adopt and apply gender sensitive policies, also to appoint women in public posts.

Significant changes favouring women began to take place, after Greece joined the EU and PASOK came in power, in 1981. The greatest change concerned the totally anachronistic family law. Many progressive reforms followed, since then, which broke old prejudices and stereotypes (marriage, divorce, abortion, etc.), problems which had been mostly imposed by the ultra-conservative and powerful Greek Orthodox Church. Progress since 1981 was visible. Women's self-esteem and confidence was strengthened, although faced with great resistance coming from traditional cultural practices, unequal distribution of family responsibilities, male violence and men's defence of their privileges. In parliamentary elections of 1996, 19 women were elected MPs (6.3 %), in 2000, 31 (10.3 %), in 2009, 52 (17.3 %), in 2012, 63 (21.0 %) and last, in September 2015, as a sign of backlash, only 54 women elected (18 %).

The situation has been bad concerning social partners, mostly dominated by communist and radical left. Not even one woman has been elected in the presidium of the General Confederation of Labour and only one at the Executive Committee. The Greek Unions have proved to be the most hostile regime towards gender justice and against any quota system. Actually, I cannot see any significant progress in this area since the 19th century!

The quota system has been very controversial, within unions and within political parties. Many parties have adopted quota systems for party organs and also legislation (law N. 3636/2008) has been introduced to ensure that 1/3 of the candidates, countrywide, should be women, in national and local elections. This measure has been of little help, since party mechanisms and old-boy's networks always find ways and means to exclude women. Neighbouring countries, not even members of the EU, have managed much

better than Greece. Unfortunately, when Greece joined the EU in 1981, ex-ante conditionality on gender issues was not included in the accession process!

However, progress in women's rights and gender equality is an irreversible fact, in Greece and in all SEE states. The integration into the EU structures and Europeanisation remains the main political goal. It is good, thanks to European Parliament's pressure, that the signing of Stabilization and Association Agreements, in view of accession to EU, require that governments incorporate the European equality legislation into their national legal systems and also actively promote genuine equality for men and women. The EU has, indeed, inspired progressive policies, which have modernized societies and benefitted women's interests and gender justice, against long-standing hegemonic masculinities and old traditions, particularly strong, in the region.

FES: The gender wage gap has been growing in the SEE region in the past twenty years. What are the reasons and direct consequences of this?

Karamanou: Gender is an integral part of wage determination. Culture and history matter. This is especially true in a region such as SEE, which has been notorious for long-standing conflicts and for a deeply embedded Balkan/Patriarchal/Mediterranean culture. The Ottoman legacy is still present. Patriarchy is institutionalized through legal, economic, social and cultural institutions. Both culture and social habits are determinants of the value of female labour. In my estimation, devaluation of women's work, domestic division of labour, dichotomy between productive and reproductive labour, gender hierarchies, patriarchal structures and pre-entry discrimination, largely explain the disadvantaged position in the labour market and the growing feminization of poverty, the SEE countries. The fact that the gender pay gap is widening in the SEE region, is also owned to the international crisis, the prevalence of neoliberal policies and the inability of the region to respond by quickly reforming and adjusting to the new realities of the globalization and the fading influence of the Keynesian compromise, dominant until the early 80s, in the West.

Gender discrimination is incorporated in the wage structure through both individual employ-

er wage practices and collective bargaining. It also reflects not only current processes, but also the weight of history on women's marginalization. Having children has a positive impact on men's wages, but a negative one on women's. Cultural prejudices regarding the relative worth of women's skills and collective bargaining power, have historically depreciated the value of the female human. Wage discrimination is not only reflected in gender pay gap but is also embedded in the whole institutional context governing wage policies, such as ranking of jobs, the system of jobs grading, or the principles underlying payment systems.

I have personally worked for 23 years in a heavily male dominated company-the Greek Telecommunications (OTE). Until 1983, women were only employed as secretaries, telephone operators, and cleaners, even women with university degrees, and naturally they had different treatment regarding wages, promotion, and pension regulations. This policy targeted to early exit of women towards retirement. Women's place was supposed to be at home, to support husband and children. That was the mentality, until the great changes in the 80s. Nowadays, with the country still sank in the economic crisis, the women who left their job early, making use of early retirement legislation, are in old age, poor and desperate. The younger women are faced with the repercussions of crisis, mostly unemployed, or in part-time and precarious jobs. Women, in Greece, are paid an average of 15 % less than men (at the EU¹ level it is 16.4 %).

The findings suggest that promotion of gender equality in Greece and the closing of the wage gap should pay attention to removing informal barriers to entry for women in educational fields traditionally chosen by men (e.g. effective careers advice, work experience placements, matching of young girls with professional choices). It is found that subjects in which women are relatively over represented (e.g. Education, Humanities) are also those with the lowest wage returns. Occupations, such as teaching, nursing or sales, predominantly carried out by women, offer lower wages than occupations predominantly carried out by men, even when the same level of experience and education is needed.

However, it is clear that there is no one cause of the longstanding gender wage gap, since factors involved do not remain fixed, but are getting reshaped, in line with changing economic, technological, social and political forces. Labour market studies have not fully theorized the integration of markets and capitalist system in producing employment segregation by gender. The contribution of feminist theory in this respect has been decisive, because examines both, unequal pay for equal work, and unequal pay for work of equal value (the low value to jobs that women do).

Gender equality legislation, as well as gender mainstreaming, are very important, but cannot fully address the structural and institutional dynamics that continue to generate gender based inequalities. What a gender mainstreaming approach can demonstrate is that dealing with the gender pay gap, through a purely technical process of legislation, auditing, reviewing, monitoring and accountability measures will never be enough. This is not to deny the worth of those strategies, but to recognize that all strategies have limitations and no single strategy can do it all. Instead we need multiple strategies that are thought together, integrated through theory, as well as legislation and enforcement.

FES: What needs to happen to attain full gender equality in the EU? Where do you see such changes being made?

Karamanou: Feminism and democracy are urgently needed in a world that is not working, is dangerously out of control, and is losing a sense of what means to be human. First, and above all, we need a united and strong EU and to this end to mobilize women throughout Europe to regenerate, and adjust to an ever changing world, the social-democratic ideals of equality, social justice, solidarity, and a fair distribution of wealth.

We need a European Parliament with more decisive powers, as it has been the main defender of human rights and gender equality, contributing to the adoption of the EU gender policy, even inspiring and defending women's rights outside EU borders.

We need to work towards a gender balance political world, in terms of policy, gender representation, and stereotypes. Fight for the imple-

1 <http://greece.greekreporter.com/tag/EU/>.

mentation of already existing EU and domestic legislation and also introduce binding legislation for fighting violence and the trafficking of women. EU must tackle rising levels of abusive and irregular situations for thousands of women refugees and migrants. Sexual and reproductive health and rights is another important issue within the international legal and political framework.

It is also important to focus on all kinds of symbolisms of male dominance, as it is the ban of women from Mount Athos (the so called Holy Mountain), where only men are allowed to visit. In this struggle, men should also need to be mobilized and finally convinced that gender equality is a win-win situation and not a zero-sum game.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Southeast Europe

After more than two decades of engagement in southeastern Europe, the FES appreciates that the challenges and problems still facing this region can best be resolved through a shared regional framework. Our commitment to advancing our core interests in democratic consolidation, social and economic justice and peace through regional cooperation, has since 2015 been strengthened by establishing an infrastructure to coordinate the FES' regional work out of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Regional Dialogue Southeast Europe (Dialogue SOE).

Dialogue SOE provides analysis of shared challenges in the region and develops suitable regional programs and activities in close cooperation with the twelve FES country offices across Southeast Europe. Furthermore, we integrate our regional work into joint initiatives with our colleagues in Berlin and Brussels. We aim to inform and be informed by the efforts of both local and international organizations in order to further our work in southeastern Europe as effectively as possible.

Our regional initiatives are advanced through three broad working lines:

- Social Democratic Politics and Values
- Social and Economic Justice
- Progressive Peace Policy

Our website provides information about individual projects within each of these working lines, past events, and future initiatives: <http://www.fes-southeasteurope.org>

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