

# 2024

The Annual Report of the  
OSCE PA Special Representative on  
Gender Issues

## **FOSTERING FREE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES:**

## **THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN A TIME OF DEMOCRATIC DECLINE**



## **THE 2024 REPORT ON GENDER ISSUES:**

### **Fostering free and inclusive societies: The role of civil society organizations in a time of democratic decline**

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been two and a half years since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in a blatant and brutal assault on Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's barbaric and illegal war on Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the Ukrainian people and thrust the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) region into crisis. As my 2023 gender report *Understanding and Addressing the Gendered Consequences of the War in Ukraine* underscored, the war has had a particularly grave and disproportionate impact on Ukrainian women and girls.<sup>1</sup> Among other consequences, the war has deepened pre-existing gender inequalities in Ukraine and exacerbated the risks of gender-based violence. As well, women and girls make up the vast majority of those who have been internally displaced or forced to seek refuge outside of Ukraine.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly's (OSCE PA) *Vancouver Declaration*, adopted at its 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Session in July 2023, recalled that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine constituted "a clear, gross and uncorrected violation of Helsinki principles, as well as a complete transgression of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."<sup>2</sup> The *Vancouver Declaration* also expressed the Assembly's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its inherent right to defend itself. Almost a year later, our commitment to Ukraine must remain resolute. Now more than ever, OSCE participating States must stand behind Ukraine.

More broadly, likeminded countries across the globe must stand together in support of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – tenets of free societies which today are under assault across the world. After decades of expansion, there has been an overall decline in global freedom and democracy over a period of nearly twenty years. This pattern of democratic backsliding is one that has affected every part of the world, including the OSCE region where illiberal political parties and leaders have sought – and in some cases, succeeded – in co-opting democratic institutions and restricting fundamental freedoms. Efforts to silence, intimidate and shutter civil society organizations (CSOs) have also become part of the authoritarian playbook.

The *Vancouver Declaration* emphasized that robust and independent CSOs are necessary for the maintenance of healthy democracies. Indeed, CSOs play a critical role in empowering individuals, mobilizing communities, defending the public interest and holding governments to account. They also play a fundamental role in promoting and defending gender equality, a

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hedy Fry, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) Special Representative on Gender Issues, *Understanding and Addressing the Gendered Consequences of the War in Ukraine*, OSCE PA, June 2023.

<sup>2</sup> OSCE PA, *Vancouver Declaration and Resolutions*, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the OSCE PA, July 2024.

cornerstone of democratic societies. Unfortunately, as the Rapporteur of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions underscored in his 2023 report, some governments in the OSCE region are trying to shrink the space in which CSOs can operate in what he characterized as “clear attacks on democratic processes and the rule of law.”<sup>3</sup>

This report examines the role of CSOs in fostering free and inclusive societies and supporting the realization of gender equality. The first part of the report provides an overview of regional and global trends in the areas of democracy and freedom and looks at how these trends may be affecting the realization of gender equality in the OSCE region. The second part of the report looks specifically at the contributions that CSOs make to fostering democratic societies. It also provides an overview of consultations that I held with CSOs in Armenia and Hungary this past year as OSCE Special Representative on Gender Issues. The report concludes by discussing ways that participating States can support gender equality in the OSCE region by reinforcing protections for CSOs.

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<sup>3</sup> Johan Buser, *Report for the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions*, AS(23) RP 3 E, 2023.

## SECTION I

### PART I – GLOBAL FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

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#### A. RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

As noted above, there is broad consensus that global freedom and democracy is stagnating or in decline. The non-governmental organization Freedom House reports that, for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, global freedom declined in 2023. According to Freedom House, 52 countries registered a deterioration in national political and civil liberties in 2023, compared to only 21 countries that saw improvements.<sup>4</sup> Freedom House notes that the scope and scale of the deterioration was extensive, affecting about one-fifth of the world’s population. It explains that flawed elections, including the creation of an uneven playing field for opposition parties, was one of the leading causes of the global decline in freedom in 2023. It further notes that armed conflicts and the threat of authoritarian aggression made the world less safe and democratic in that year.

For its part, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) issued largely similar findings. EIU’s Democracy index, which assesses the state of democracy across 167 countries based on five measures – electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, democratic political culture, and civil liberties – indicates that democracy continued to erode globally in 2023.<sup>5</sup> Out of 165 countries surveyed, EIU reports that only 24 countries could be classified as “full democracies” in 2023. EIU indicates that the categories that have recorded the biggest deterioration are civil liberties and electoral process and pluralism.

The *Democracy Report 2024* by the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), a research centre based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, indicates that the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in 2023 is down to 1985 levels.<sup>6</sup> According to the report, approximately 71% of the world’s population – 5.7 billion people – live in autocracies, an increase from 48% a decade ago. Of particular concern for the OSCE region, the report indicates that the pattern of democratic backsliding has been especially “stark” in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as in South Asia. The report notes that freedom of expression, clean elections, and freedom of association, including the extent to which CSOs can form and operate freely, are the most affected components of democracy worldwide.

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<sup>4</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024 – The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict](#), February 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2023: Age of Conflict*, 15 February 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Variety of Democracies Institute, [Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot](#) March 2024.

The 2023 report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, which discusses the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, also highlights disturbing regional trends. Among other challenges, the report found that there has been an increase in violence and intimidation against journalists and a rise in the use of surveillance and other tactics to attempt to dissuade them from doing their jobs. It also underscores concerns about the passage of new legislation – and the misuse of existing laws – to constrain civil society activism and freedom of association and assembly. It further notes concerns about “a polarised political environment in which hate speech continues to grow, both online and offline, often targeting women and range of minorities and vulnerable groups.”<sup>7</sup>

In the EU, the 2023 Rule of Law Report from the European Commission states that “CSOs and human rights defenders have increasingly faced challenges linked to the narrowing of civic space.”<sup>8</sup> The report provides examples of challenges faced by CSOs in Cyprus, Greece, Spain, Italy and France, and notes that “in certain Member States, civil society continues to face serious challenges or systematic restrictions of their operating space,”<sup>9</sup> mentioning the cases of Hungary and Poland specifically.

Various ideas and interpretations have been advanced as to why freedom and democracy are currently under threat globally. Common explanations link democratic erosion to increasing support for leaders and political parties with anti-democratic tendencies who have been able to exploit rising popular discontent. According to some observers, many of these leaders and parties have been able to tap into popular anger over economic challenges and grievances, including income inequality, as well as concerns over issues of national identity, such as immigration, religion and culture.<sup>10</sup> Some have suggested that aspiring autocrats also used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to restrict civil liberties and consolidate power. Meanwhile, the *2023 State of Civil Society Report* by the international non-profit organization CIVICUS notes that disinformation and conspiracy theories “soared” during the pandemic, which it argues undermined trust in democratic institutions.<sup>11</sup>

It is especially concerning that the democratic backsliding being witnessed today is occurring against a backdrop of rising conflict. After declining in the 1990s and early 2000s,

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<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, [State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law](#), Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, [2023 Rule of Law Report](#), p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: Thomas Carothers and Benjamin Press, [Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2022; and William A. Galston, [The populist challenge to liberal democracy](#), Brookings, 17 April 2018.

<sup>11</sup> CIVICUS, [2023 State of Civil Society Report](#).

conflict has been on the rise since 2012.<sup>12</sup> According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Project (ACLED), a disaggregated data collection, analysis and crisis mapping initiative, in the past five years alone, there has been a 22% increase in recorded incidents of political violence.<sup>13</sup> Notably, ACLED indicates that conflict is growing faster in middle-income, democratizing countries. As the organization notes, in today's world, "[p]overty is not a precursor to conflict, and wealth is not a guarantee of peace."

## B. DEMOCRACY AND GENDER EQUALITY

Global democratic backsliding is occurring alongside growing threats to women's rights and gender equality. A 2020 research paper commissioned by UN Women indicates that "[w]hile gender equality has always been contested, opposition to gender equality and to women's rights activism has become more vocal, global and better organized in recent years."<sup>14</sup> The paper points to democratic backsliding and the closure of civic space as two interrelated political developments that can help explain what the authors refer to as "the rise of anti-gender governments." In some national contexts, the paper contends, backsliding regimes seek "to enforce heteronormative and patriarchal family models" and curtail reproductive rights and the rights of sexual minorities. It adds that backsliding regimes may view the work of women's rights activists and CSOs as endangering "traditional values" and, in response, may attempt to obstruct their activities by shuttering the civic spaces they need to thrive.

Against the backdrop of what it calls ongoing democratic contraction, the 2023 *Global State of Democracy* report by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), an intergovernmental organization that supports democracy worldwide, paints a mixed picture of the status of gender equality globally. Overall, the report finds that there has been slow but steady growth in gender equality over time, but with important regional variations.<sup>15</sup> Europe as a whole performs highly on measures of gender equality and has continued to make progress over the past decade. By contrast, the regions of Western Asia,

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<sup>12</sup> International Crisis Group, [10 Conflicts to Watch in 2024](#), 1 January 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Armed Conflict Location & Event Project (ACLED), [ACLED Conflict Index](#), January 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Conny Roggeband and Andrea Krizsán, [Democratic Backsliding and the Backlash against Women's Rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics](#), Discussion paper, UN Women, No. 35, June 2020.

<sup>15</sup> International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), [The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances](#), November 2023.

Africa, and Asia and the Pacific perform much lower on IDEA's gender equality indices and their performance has been stagnant over the past decade.<sup>16</sup>

The global pattern of democratic backsliding threatens hard-won gains in gender equality that women's rights activists, CSOs and others have fought for over decades. There is evidence that democracy promotes more egalitarian gender attitudes, and that a two-way relationship exists between the development of democratic institutions and the increased participation of women in public life. For example, in a 2022 paper, Evie Papada and Staffan Lindberg of V-Dem indicate that gender equality is much more likely to be the norm in democratic countries. According to Ms. Papada and Mr. Lindberg, "[m]inimally democratic countries have on average 33% lower levels of egalitarian gender attitudes compared to fully democratic countries. Hybrid and authoritarian regimes, by contrast, have over 60% lower levels."<sup>17</sup>

Research shows that democracy and gender equality are mutually reinforcing in other ways as well. For example, a policy brief by Ted Piccone, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, argues that there is "a democratic threshold for higher levels of gender equality in terms of both women's physical security and economic and political participation."<sup>18</sup> The brief indicates that countries with lower levels of violence against women also tend to be countries with higher levels of liberal democracy. While the brief notes that strong democracy is not a guarantee of gender equality, it highlights the link between strong democratic institutions and policies that combat gender discrimination. It also makes the link between high levels of gender equality and a "nation's relative state of peace, a healthier domestic security environment, and lower levels of aggression toward other states."<sup>19</sup>

A 2023 report by the Williams Institute, a research centre on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy, indicates that countries that are highly accepting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)<sup>20</sup> people tend to have higher levels of liberal democracy and higher gross domestic product per capita than countries that are less accepting of the LGBTI community. Worryingly, the report indicates that today's global

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<sup>16</sup> Atsuko Hirakawa and Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, [Case Study: Gender Equality](#), Global State of Democracy 2023 Report. For more information, see: International IDEA, "Gender Equality," [Global State of Democracy Indices](#), database, accessed 19 March 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Evie Papada and Staffan Lindberg, [The Case for Democracy: Does Democracy Promote Gender Equality?](#) Policy Brief, No. 37, Varieties of Democracy Institute, December 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Ted Piccone, [Democracy, gender equality, and security](#), Policy brief, Brookings, September 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The term LGBTI is used in this document. However, governments and organizations sometimes use other terms that are extended to cover queer people explicitly (LGBTQI) or other sub-groups (LGBTI+). For example, in Canada, at the federal level, the term "[2SLGBTQI+](#)" is the generally accepted term. It refers collectively to the Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other sexually and gender-diverse communities.

democratic backsliding is occurring in conjunction with a rise in state sanctioned rhetoric and policymaking that directly targets members of the LGBTI community. According to the report, attacks on LGBTI persons “can be a precursor to democratic backsliding, and anti-LGBTI stigma and policies may contribute to the weakening of democratic norms and institutions.”<sup>21</sup> Observers have suggested that the rise of some political movements in Europe, variously described as far-right, Eurosceptic and populist, has resulted in a backlash against women’s rights and LGBTI communities, and against CSOs that promote and defend their interests.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, the June 2024 elections to the European Parliament, which resulted in gains by such groups, could accelerate this trend.

The *Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/24*, a report by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo, also highlights the relationship between women’s status in society and peace and democracy. The report explains that “the rollback of women’s rights, including through political violence, is often embedded within larger autocratic movements to repress civil liberties.”<sup>23</sup> It argues that suppressing women’s voices is a deliberate tactic of authoritarian regimes and one that accelerates the deterioration of democracy. Specifically, the report notes that political violence against women contracts civic space and undermines women’s representation in decision-making – actions that have consequences for representative democracy. By contrast, the report underlines that “[w]omen’s free, full, and equal ability to participate in public spaces and in decision-making roles is required for building resilient democracies, advancing sustainable development, and safeguarding prospects for peace.” Overall, the report finds that countries where the rights of women are respected tend to be countries with free and fair elections, strong civil society autonomy and high government accountability.

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew R. Flores, Miguel Fuentes Carreño, and Ari Shaw, [Democratic Backsliding and LGBTI Acceptance](#), The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Oxfam international, [A Feminist Europe? Taking Stock of the 2019-2024 Term Ahead of the European Parliament Elections](#), March 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Peace Research Institute Oslo, [Women, Peace and Security Index 2023/24](#), 2023.

## PART II: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN FOSTERING DEMOCRATIC AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

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Over the last several decades, many experts and academics have analyzed the contributions of CSOs to the emergence and maintenance of democracies. Their findings have shown that CSOs are key to democratization and democratic consolidation and highlighted the role they can play as a bulwark against democratic backsliding.<sup>24</sup>

However, as noted above, observers have drawn attention to a shrinking space for CSOs to operate both globally and at a regional OSCE level. The UN Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space published in 2020, defines civic space as “the environment that enables people and groups – or ‘civic space actors’ – to participate meaningfully in the political, economic, social and cultural life in their societies.”<sup>25</sup> In its most recent annual report, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) expressed concern regarding a “worrying trend of attempts by public authorities in some places to narrow the civic space, without a proper risk assessment of the civil society sector nor concrete justification for such reforms.”<sup>26</sup>

Research shows that shrinking civic spaces and mounting restrictions on CSOs correlate strongly with a deterioration of democratic institutions.<sup>27</sup> In healthy democracies, experts note, “CSOs monitor government behavior and [...] raise the alarm when governments violate democratic norms, for example, through mobilizing opposition voters or reaching out to international allies.” When restrictions are imposed, however, they “likely hamper such activities, implying fewer constraints on governments’ attempts to dismantle horizontal checks and balances.”<sup>28</sup> Restrictions also affect the potential of CSOs to facilitate citizen participation in public life and to act as a conduit between communities and institutions. This is particularly detrimental to minority or marginalized groups.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Hannah Smidt, Jessica Johansson and Thomas Richter, “[Civil Society Under Attack: The Consequences for Horizontal Accountability Institutions](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2024; and Emil Marc Havstrup and Lea Friedberg, eds., [Civil Society and the Fight against Democratic Backsliding: Lessons from the past, struggles of today, solutions for tomorrow](#), 2022.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, [United Nations Guidance Note – Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#), September 2020, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), [Democracy and Human Rights in the OSCE, Annual report 2023](#), 2024, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Smidt, Jessica Johansson and Thomas Richter, “[Civil Society Under Attack: The Consequences for Horizontal Accountability Institutions](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

According to legal scholar Antoine Buyse, “pressure on civic space directly affects human rights.”<sup>29</sup> The pressures on civic space weaken or violate human rights, including the freedom of association, the right to peaceful assembly and the freedom of expression. Restrictions on civic space impede the capacity of CSOs to positively contribute to democratization and the preservation of human rights.

## A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO DEMOCRACY

While CSOs are by no means homogenous, the majority engage in certain key activities that enable them to contribute to democracy. First, CSOs engage and empower citizens in a wide range of social and human rights issues.<sup>30</sup> Second, many of these organizations advocate for respect for the rule of law and human rights, and monitor government policies and actions in these areas. Third, through their work, CSOs promote good governance, transparency and accountability on the part of public authorities. The following section examines some of the contributions that CSOs make to fostering democratic and inclusive societies through each of these three activities.

### 1. Citizen engagement and empowerment

The right of citizens to participate in public affairs is recognized in Article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which has been ratified by all OSCE participating States.<sup>31</sup> According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, “the participation of civil society in policy and [decision-making] processes is an indicator of democracy and contributes to the quality and effectiveness of laws and policies.”<sup>32</sup> In the European Union (EU), Article 11 of the *Treaty on European Union* requires EU institutions to “give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action” and to “maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.”<sup>33</sup>

CSOs play an important role in mobilizing, engaging and empowering citizens across the OSCE region.<sup>34</sup> Smidt, Johansson and Richter note that CSOs “create domestic networks

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<sup>29</sup> Antoine Buyse, “[Squeezing civic space: restrictions on civil society organizations and the linkages with human rights](#),” *The International Journal of Human rights*, Vol. 22, No. 8, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Europe’s Civil Society: Still Under Pressure – Update 2022](#), p.7.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

<sup>32</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Protecting Civic Space in the EU](#), 2021, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> European Union, [Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union](#).

<sup>34</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Protecting civil society – Update 2023](#).

where citizens can interact, build trust, and share information.”<sup>35</sup> Many CSOs directly involve members of the communities they serve or represent in their activities. As well, CSOs can act as a conduit between citizens and policymakers at both the local and national level.<sup>36</sup> For instance, ODIHR notes that when it comes to gender equality, the collaboration of CSOs with “institutional mechanisms” can help to “give voice to the unheard.”<sup>37</sup>

That said, organizations representing groups and people at risk of exclusion or marginalization, such as people with disabilities, LGBTI persons, or ethnic minorities, can struggle to act as a conduit as they often face barriers in accessing policy makers and engaging with political institutions.<sup>38</sup> Among these barriers, such organizations often suffer from a lack of financial or human resources. Some CSOs representing groups at risk of exclusion have reported that they were denied funding in a discriminatory way.<sup>39</sup> These CSOs may also experience additional challenges in empowering citizens because the issues that they advocate for are considered controversial by parts of the population.<sup>40</sup> This can be the case for organizations working with LGBTI people or defending sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. Rule of Law

Promoting the rule of law is another way in which CSOs make an important contribution to democratic societies. The rule of law is a crucial dimension of democratic systems. In 2012, the Declaration of the high-level meeting of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels stated that “all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to just, fair and equitable laws and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law” and reaffirmed that “human rights, the rule of law and democracy are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hannah Smidt, Jessica Johansson and Thomas Richter, “[Civil Society Under Attack: The Consequences for Horizontal Accountability Institutions](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Adrià Albareda, “[Connecting Society and Policymakers? Conceptualizing and Measuring the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations to Act as Transmission Belts](#),” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, vol. 29, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Institutional mechanisms are defined as “state-based structures at all levels and across all formal government areas assigned to promote the rights, status and condition of women and strike-down gender-based bias.” ODIHR, [Institutional Mechanisms as Critical Actors for Gender Equality: A Review from the OSCE Region](#), 2023, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Protecting civil society – Update 2023](#).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> United Nations General Assembly, [Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 24 September 2012](#), A/RES/67/1.

Some CSOs across the OSCE region are engaged in advocacy and directly defend the principle of the rule of law. For example, certain organizations monitor and raise awareness on proposed legislative changes that could affect their country’s judicial system or civic space.<sup>43</sup> Other CSOs support effective justice systems; promote access to justice; mobilize against corruption; and support the work of independent bodies and authorities such as ombudspersons or national human rights institutions.

Many CSOs monitor the activities of governments and public actors to ensure that they respect the rule of law. Strategies employed include building coalitions, promoting transparency, raising public awareness, and providing expert information. Some CSOs engage in strategic litigation to protect human rights. In Latin America for instance, the Latin American Network for Gender-based Strategic Litigation has emerged as a platform where organizations share information to strategically use court cases to defend the human rights of sexual violence victims and to strengthen the institutions responsible for protecting these rights.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. Accountability

Holding public authorities to account is another essential contribution CSOs make to democratic life. Researchers have shown that “a robust civil society is critical to holding governments accountable beyond elections and [that] CSOs are important for increasing the political awareness and impact of their members.”<sup>45</sup> Among the mechanisms that allow CSOs to play this role, experts cite “the public pressure exerted by protest and other forms of contentious politics, the organization of international support and media attention, the development of citizen-based networks to monitor and oversee government agencies, the utilization of referenda and other popular initiatives for citizen legislation, and direct intervention via citizen activism to pressure the bureaucracy, the courts, and politicians.”<sup>46</sup>

CSOs can also reinforce what experts call “horizontal accountability,” that is “the oversight exercised by state institutions such as legislatures, judicial branches, ombudsmen, and prosecutor generals.”<sup>47</sup> For instance, CSOs can provide expert independent information

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<sup>43</sup> See, for instance, in Poland: Barbara Grabowska-Moroz, Olga Śniadach, “[The Role of Civil Society in Protecting Judicial Independence in Times of Rule of Law Backsliding in Poland](#),” *Utrecht Law Review*, Vol. 17, no. 2, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Strategic litigation can be a force for gender justice](#), 25 June 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Valeriya Mechkova, Anna Lührmann, and Staffan I. Lindberg, “[The Accountability Sequence: from De-jure to De-Facto Constraints on Governments](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 54, 2019.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Bernhard, et al., “[Parties, Civil Society, and the Deterrence of Democratic Defection](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 55, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Valeriya Mechkova, Anna Lührmann, and Staffan I. Lindberg, “[The Accountability Sequence: from De-jure to De-Facto Constraints on Governments](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 54, 2019.

that is useful for parliamentarians to oversee the actions of the government.<sup>48</sup> They can also be a critical source of information for court judges and prosecutors tasked with fighting corruption or preserving human rights.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Legal Environment

The ability of CSOs to positively contribute to democratic life is tied to the legal environment in which they operate. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (the Agency) states that “[a] legal environment conducive to ensuring an open civic space requires a strong legislative framework that protects and promotes the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, in conformity with international human rights law and standards.”<sup>50</sup>

In a 2023 report, the Agency notes that the challenges most commonly encountered by CSOs in the EU in 2022 related to access to information; legislation on civil dialogue and consultations; freedom of expression; data protection laws; and transparency or lobbying laws.<sup>51</sup> That same report also mentions the issue of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), which are often used to intimidate citizens and CSOs. In April 2024, the European Union adopted the *Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings (“Strategic lawsuits against public participation”)*.<sup>52</sup> The aim of this directive is to enable judges to identify SLAPPs and order their early dismissal, in order to protect journalists and activists who are targeted by this type of abusive legal action.<sup>53</sup>

In the OSCE region, questions have also been raised about the effects of legislative initiatives targeting associations receiving international or foreign funding. In 2023, ODIHR published a *Note on Legislative Initiatives on Transparency and Regulation of Associations Funded from Abroad or So-called “Foreign Agents Laws” and Similar Legislation and their Compliance with International Human Rights Standards*. According to this note, since the adoption of a “foreign agents law” in Russia in 2012, several countries have adopted or attempted to adopt similar laws targeting associations receiving foreign funding, allegedly to counter national security

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<sup>48</sup> Hannah Smidt, Jessica Johansson and Thomas Richter, “[Civil Society Under Attack: The Consequences for Horizontal Accountability Institutions](#),” *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 2024.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, [Protecting Civil Society – Update 2023](#).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> European Union, [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings \(“Strategic lawsuits against public participation”\)](#).

<sup>53</sup> Rafał Mańko, “[Strategic lawsuits against public participation \(SLAPPs\)](#),” European Parliamentary Research Service, Briefing, February 2024.

risks posed by “foreign influence.” The notes indicates that “the aim of so-called ‘foreign agents laws’ or similar legislation is generally to seek to increase the scrutiny of such funding and of the activities of the recipient associations by introducing new obligations for such associations [...], as well as special oversight, inspections and sanctions in case of non-compliance.”<sup>54</sup> However, ODIHR pointed that “such legislation generally fails to comply with the strict requirements provided in international human rights law governing the imposition of restrictions on the right to freedom of association – namely, that they must be prescribed by law, pursue one of the legitimate aims recognized by international standards, be proportionate and necessary in a democratic society, and be non-discriminatory.”<sup>55</sup> These “foreign agents laws” are often accompanied by public campaigns smearing CSOs receiving foreign funds.

## B. SPOTLIGHT ON CIVIL SOCIETY: SUPPORTING THE REALIZATION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN ARMENIA AND HUNGARY

In November 2023 and February 2024, respectively, I met with CSOs in Armenia and Hungary to gain a better understanding of gender issues in these two countries and the role played by local CSOs in supporting the realization of gender equality. These visits also provided broader insight into the relationship that exists between freedom and democracy and the independence of civil society.

### 1. Case study I – Armenia

On 17 November 2023, I held a meeting with the representatives of 10 Armenian CSOs in Yerevan, Armenia, to discuss the status of gender equality and the role of civil society in that country. The meeting underscored the vital work carried out by national CSOs, which includes tackling gender-based violence, addressing discrimination against LGBTI individuals and assisting displaced women from Nagorno-Karabakh. Discussions also shed light on some of the challenges facing CSOs in Armenia.

Armenia ranks 61<sup>st</sup> out of 146 countries on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index for 2023.<sup>56</sup> The UN Women Data Hub accords Armenia a score of 82% for its overall legislative frameworks on gender equality, and 80% for its legislative frameworks on

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<sup>54</sup> ODIHR, [Note on Legislative Initiatives on Transparency and Regulation of Associations Funded from Abroad or So-called “Foreign Agents Laws” and Similar Legislation and their Compliance with International Human Rights Standards](#), 2023, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#).

gender-based violence.<sup>57</sup> CSO representatives commented on the status of gender equality in Armenia. For instance, they indicated that law enforcement has improved the way it approaches domestic violence in recent years, noting the establishment of a special police division dedicated to preventing domestic violence.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, they also suggested that robust training be provided to all law enforcement officers to allow them to better respond to cases of domestic violence.

According to the European Union’s 2021 Country Gender Profile for Armenia, LGBTI individuals “face harassment, discrimination and violence” in Armenia.<sup>59</sup> Discussions with representatives of CSOs working to advance LGBTI rights confirmed that assessment. For example, they highlighted that LGBTI children are often subjected to bullying and domestic violence or forced to undergo conversion therapies. CSO representatives identified sexuality education in schools as a measure that could have a positive impact on LGBTI youth.

Overall, civil society in Armenia is strong. In its 2024 Freedom in the World report, Freedom House notes that the Armenian public is relatively free to express diverse views on sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution.<sup>60</sup> The V-Dem “Core Civil Society Index” – which measures the robustness of a country’s civil society on a scale from 0 (lowest level of civil society robustness) to 1 (highest level of civil society robustness) – offers insight into the degree of autonomy of CSOs in Armenia and their ability to operate freely. Figure 1 shows the evolution of the Civil Society Index in Armenia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

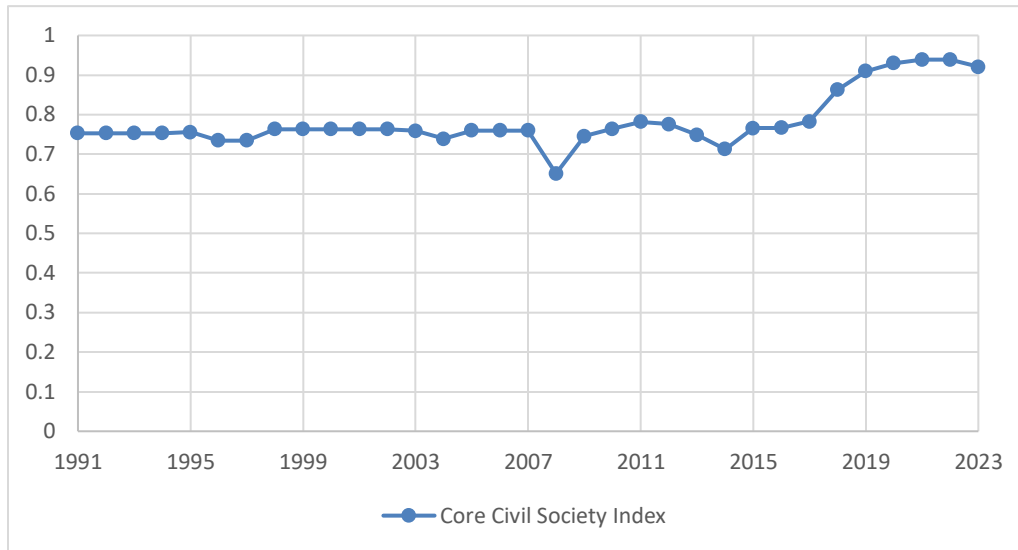
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<sup>57</sup> UN Women, [UN Women Data Hub: Armenia](#).

<sup>58</sup> Also see Council of Europe, “[Armenian Police officers trained on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#),” News, 26 October 2022.

<sup>59</sup> European Union, [Country Gender Profile: Armenia](#), August 2021.

<sup>60</sup> Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024: Armenia](#).

**Figure 1 – Core Civil Society Index in Armenia (1991–2023)**

Source: Figure prepared using data obtained from Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), "[V-Dem Armenia Dataset v14](#)," V-Dem Project.

V-Dem recorded an increase in civil society robustness following the 2018 Armenian Revolution, a series of massive peaceful protests which initiated a political transition in Armenia. CSOs played an important role in mobilizing citizens before and during the popular uprisings. That role improved their public image and contributed to the public's perception of CSOs as potential change-makers.<sup>61</sup> A number of observers commented on the important role that women's CSOs played during the revolution. For example, a 2019 report by the UN Special Representative on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association underscored that "the participation of women and youth was key to the transition."<sup>62</sup>

The change in government post-revolution presented opportunities for civil society engagement, fostering a new culture of cooperation between citizens and government. Armenian civil society is one of the main channels through which vulnerable women and gender-diverse individuals can access services and support. Groups benefitting from CSO services and support include rural women, women displaced by conflicts, women living with disabilities, women survivors of gender-based violence, women from ethnic minorities, and

<sup>61</sup> Council of Europe, [Civil participation in the decision-making process: Fact finding visit to Armenia](#), Report, 2020, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> UN Women, [Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief](#), 2019, p. 23; and UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, [Visit to Armenia](#), Report, 13 May 2019, para. 59.

the LGBTI community. According to UN Women, the Government of Armenia recognizes the importance of services provided by CSOs and seeks to draw on their expertise.<sup>63</sup>

That said, some CSOs indicated that they believe the Government of Armenia views consultations with CSOs as a formality rather than a form of genuine dialogue.<sup>64</sup> For example, some observers report that legislative amendments related to the voluntary military service for women was not discussed with CSOs, even though women's organizations raised concerns about the amendments.<sup>65</sup> Following a visit to Armenia in 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association issued a report that called on the Government of Armenia to ensure that Armenian CSOs, particularly human rights organizations, are systematically consulted before the passage of any legislative initiative.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, during my consultations in Armenia, CSO representatives identified access to funding as a significant operational challenge. Most national CSOs are financially dependent on grants from foreign donors, and other sources of funding – such as public fundraising or business contributions – constitute only a small part of their income.<sup>67</sup> According to a 2019 Council of Europe report, unstable access to funding has a negative impact on the ability of Armenian CSOs to make long-term plans.<sup>68</sup> In a 2018 report, UN Women indicated that the majority of women's CSOs in Armenia operate in an environment of severely restricted financial aid, which affects their organizational capacity.<sup>69</sup> During my consultations, CSO representatives stressed that sustainable and stable sources of funding are needed to ensure they are able to continue operating effectively.

## 2. Case study II – Hungary

On 20 February 2024, I travelled to Budapest, Hungary, to meet with representatives of six CSOs working to advance gender equality and LGBTI rights in that country. Discussions focused on the work the six CSOs do to advocate for gender equality and LGBTI rights and to

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<sup>63</sup> UN Women, [Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief](#), 2019, p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Anush Hakobyan and Tatevik Margaryan, [CSO Meter: A Compass to Conducive Environment and CSO Empowerment. Armenia 2023 Country Report](#), Transparency International Anticorruption Center, 2023, pp. 18–19.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.; and Yelena Sargsyan, "[Gendered challenges: A closer look at female military service in Armenia](#)," *The Armenian Weekly*, 20 March 2024.

<sup>66</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, [Follow-up to country visits to Armenia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Zimbabwe](#), Report, 26 September 2022, para. 30.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2024: Armenia](#); and Council of Europe, [Civil participation in the decision-making process: Fact finding visit to Armenia](#), Report, 2020, pp. 9–10.

<sup>68</sup> Council of Europe, [Civil participation in the decision-making process: Fact finding visit to Armenia](#), Report, 2020, pp. 9–10.

<sup>69</sup> UN Women, [Armenia Country Gender Equality Brief](#), 2019, p. 23.

provide services to women and LGBTI individuals, including operating helplines, providing legal assistance, and supporting victims of domestic violence. The discussions also addressed the operating environment for CSOs and other independent voices in Hungary.

CSO representatives raised concerns about women’s rights and the status of gender equality in Hungary. In 2023, Hungary ranked 26<sup>th</sup> out of 27 EU countries on the European Institute for Gender Equality’s Gender Equality Index, and 99<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index.<sup>70</sup> Among other issues, participants reflected on the participation of women in politics. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 14.1% of members of the Országgyűlés (Hungary’s National Assembly) are women, and no women currently hold a ministerial-level position in Hungary.<sup>71</sup> CSO representatives described various barriers women face to entering and remaining in politics, including an absence of support structures, limited funding, and pervasive gender-based violence against women politicians. According to CSO representatives, the low proportion of women in politics may in part be explained by the perception of gender roles in Hungary. In particular, they identified the promotion of a traditional family model and strict gender roles for women as a growing national trend.

Freedom House’s democracy rating for Hungary has declined every year for the past decade. In 2023, Hungary’s democracy percentage was 43%, with Freedom House reporting ongoing pressure on CSOs critical of the Hungarian government.<sup>72</sup> The V-Dem Core Civil Society Index offers insight into the degree of autonomy and freedom CSOs have in Hungary. Figure 2 shows the evolution the Core Civil Society Index for Hungary since the end of the Soviet Union’s military occupation of Hungary in 1991.<sup>73</sup>

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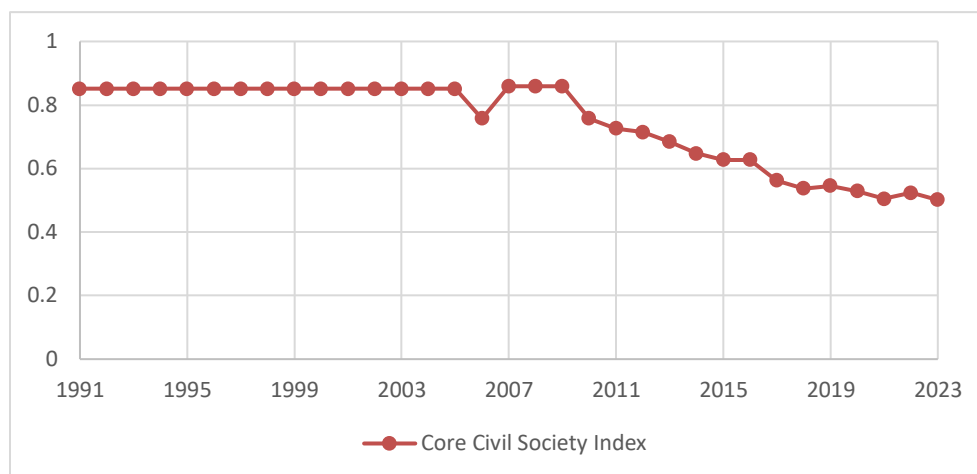
<sup>70</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, [Gender Equality Index](#), 2023; and World Economic Forum, [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#).

<sup>71</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, [Monthly ranking of women in national parliament](#).

<sup>72</sup> Freedom House’s Democracy Percentage is a translation of the Democracy Score to the 0 to 100 scale, where 0 equals least democratic and 100 equals most democratic. See Freedom House, [Nations in Transit 2023: Hungary](#).

<sup>73</sup> The Varieties of Democracy Institute Core Civil Society index measures the robustness of a country’s civil society on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 equals the lowest level of civil society robustness and 1 equals the highest level of civil society robustness.

Figure 2 – Core Civil Society Index in Hungary (1991–2023)



Source: Figure prepared using data obtained from Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem), "[V-Dem Hungary Dataset v14](#)," V-Dem Project.

V-Dem data show a trend of decreasing civil society robustness since 2010. My discussions in Budapest focused on obstacles that have been affecting the operation of CSOs in Hungary in recent years. For example, CSO representatives expressed concerns about measures restricting their organization’s ability to seek, secure and use foreign funds, including funding from the EU and EU members. These measures include proposed laws to establish reporting requirements for organizations using foreign funds, combined with public campaigns portraying CSOs receiving foreign funds as acting against the country’s interests and national security.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, CSO representatives expressed concern about the potential effects of a recently created government authority with broad powers to conduct investigations into organizations or individuals, including CSOs, that benefit from foreign funds and who influence public debate.<sup>75</sup> CSOs described these measures as having a chilling effect on free and democratic debate within Hungarian society.

Participants also underlined the specific impacts that these measures have had on CSOs working to advance women’s and LGBTI rights in Hungary. CSO representatives stressed that, because their organizations do not receive public funds, securing financial resources from foreign sources is crucial to their ability to operate.

<sup>74</sup> See Venice Commission, [Opinion on the Draft Law on the Transparency of Organisations receiving support from abroad](#), CDL-AD(2017)015, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> See Venice Commission, [Opinion on Act LXXXVIII of 2023 on the Protection of National Sovereignty](#), CDL-AD(2024)001-e, 2024.

As well, CSO representatives indicated that consultation and collaboration between the Government of Hungary and civil society had become increasingly inconsistent in recent years and was now virtually non-existent.<sup>76</sup> They noted that, following changes to the machinery of government, there is no longer a department or agency responsible exclusively for the promotion and advancement of women's rights and gender equality in Hungary. In their view, this new structure severely limits engagement between independent civil society and government officials working on gender issues.

CSOs also drew attention to legislative changes enacted in 2021 that have restricted the display or discussion of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations in the public sphere, including schools and the media. The changes, they explained, have had the effect of prohibiting or limiting access to content that “propagates or portrays divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality” for individuals under 18 years old.<sup>77</sup> CSO representatives emphasized that the legislative process was fast tracked, which limited the possibility of civil society and other interested stakeholders to provide meaningful input.

In addition to the lack of transparency surrounding the adoption of the legislative changes, CSO representatives spoke about their possible consequences, including the stigmatization and discrimination of LGBTI people and the restriction of their freedom of expression. As well, they noted that the changes had contributed to the disappearance of comprehensive sexual education from Hungarian schools as the CSOs that ran such school education programs were no longer permitted to offer them.

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<sup>76</sup> See Gero, Marton, et al. [From Exclusion to Co-Optation: Political Opportunity Structures and Civil Society Responses in De-Democratising Hungary](#), *Politics and Governance*, Vol. 11, No 1, March 2023.

<sup>77</sup> See Venice Commission, [Opinion on the compatibility with international human rights standards of Act LXXIX amending certain Acts for the protection of children](#), CDL-AD(2021)050-e, 2021.

## CONCLUSION

The global progress of democracy and freedom has been declining in recent years, including in some parts of the OSCE region. At the same time, we are observing the increased repression of journalists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives, and a control of the space in which they operate. Although restrictions on civil society are not a new phenomenon, the scale and extent of the current measures are without precedent.

By highlighting the link that exists between democratic decline and the shrinking of civic space, this report has sought to draw attention to the urgent need to take action to ensure that CSOs can continue their invaluable work. CSOs, the report has shown, play a crucial role in advocating for the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women and LGBTI persons, thus contributing to the promotion of gender equality and the defence of an inclusive and strong democracy. Among other examples, the report has highlighted the important work CSOs do to ensure that diverse voices are heard – and acted upon – in decision-making processes. As well, it has examined the various mechanisms they use to directly defend the rule of law and hold public authorities to account.

While the value of CSOs is beyond dispute, in some OSCE participating States, CSOs are facing increasing difficulties in fulfilling their essential roles and mandates. As this report has documented, they are struggling to access funding, participate in decision-making processes and carry out certain activities, in part because of laws, policies and public campaigns designed to hinder their work. Of particular concern is the adoption of so-called “foreign agents” laws, which seek to increase the scrutiny of CSO funding and activities. These laws are often combined with other tools or public campaigns portraying CSOs receiving foreign funds as acting against national interests and national security.

As the OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues, I am particularly alarmed to note the impact of these restrictions on CSOs working to advance women’s and LGBTI rights. Moreover, I am dismayed to observe that the governments of some OSCE states are targeting CSOs focused on human rights issues. Measures taken to restrict civic space generally, and CSOs focusing on gender equality specifically, are undeniably linked to the demise of free and diverse societies. Attempts to silence civil society and exclude CSOs from the public sphere must be condemned.

In both Armenia and Hungary, my consultations with CSO representatives highlighted the importance of inclusive public debate and meaningful civil society participation in decision-making processes. Discussions also made it abundantly clear that CSOs play an essential role in providing services and resources on the ground to vulnerable and marginalized groups. The closing of civic space can therefore have devastating impacts on these groups, including women and LGBTI persons.

OSCE participating States have committed to upholding the principles enshrined in the 1975 *Helsinki Final Act*, such as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of association. In line with this commitment, the OSCE community must address the closure of civic space and enhance the protection of CSOs across the OSCE region, including those that focus on women and gender specifically. The OSCE PA's 2023 *Vancouver Declaration*<sup>78</sup> and 2019 *Luxemburg Declaration*<sup>79</sup> both offer avenues for actions to better support civil society, with recommendations directed at the OSCE and OSCE participating States, as well as parliaments and parliamentarians of the OSCE region. I urge all stakeholders to see that these recommendations are implemented.

Building on my consultations with CSOs and the findings of this report, I would like to offer several calls to action. Most critically, the OSCE community should reaffirm the fundamental role of CSOs in the promotion of human rights, including the rights of women and LGBTI persons, democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, our community should acknowledge the threat that restrictions on civic space poses to democracy and gender equality and commit to addressing this growing problem. In this regard, OSCE participating States should provide a safe and enabling environment conducive to allowing civil society to flourish. To do so, participating States must ensure that their domestic legal environment enables CSOs to participate meaningfully in their country's political, economic, social and cultural life.

During my consultations, CSO representatives identified access to funding as a significant operational challenge. CSOs should be able to engage in fundraising activities, regardless of whether they work on human rights, gender matters or other issues. OSCE participating States must ensure that CSOs can access diverse sources of funding, including private and foreign funding, without undue restrictions. As well, in a number of OSCE participating States, CSOs are not – or not meaningfully – consulted on important social issues or legislative initiatives, including those that govern the operation of CSOs. Participating States have a duty to guarantee that domestic legislation, policies and practices enable CSOs to engage in meaningful dialogue with public authorities. On matters relating to gender issues, independent CSOs with expertise in this field should be systematically involved in the development of laws and policies. We must not underestimate the contributions made by civil society toward democratic, free and fair societies. To do so would be to do a disservice to us all.

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<sup>78</sup> OSCE PA, "Resolution on the role of national parliaments in enhancing participation of civil society in parliamentary and decision-making processes," in *Vancouver Declaration and Resolutions*, 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the OSCE PA, July 2024..

<sup>79</sup> OSCE PA, "Resolution on the role of civil society – individuals and non-governmental organizations – in realizing the aims and aspirations of the OSCE," in *Luxembourg Declaration and Resolutions*, 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the OSCE PA, July 2019.

## SECTION II

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Section II of the report analyzes the gender balance within the OSCE PA and the OSCE PA International Secretariat, as well as the gender breakdown in OSCE participating States' parliaments. In addition, it provides an overview of gender balance among the Vienna-based Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the OSCE.<sup>80</sup>

### PART I: GENDER BALANCE IN THE OSCE PA

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Since its foundation, the OSCE PA has been determined to improve gender balance within its structures and delegations. One of the main milestones happened during the Vilnius Annual Session in 2009, when the Standing Committee amended the OSCE PA's Rules of Procedure, introducing a new sub-clause to the Rule 1 stating that "*each national Delegation should have both genders represented.*"<sup>81</sup> Moreover, in 2011, the OSCE PA adopted a "Resolution on Women's representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly"<sup>82</sup> calling upon national parliaments to enhance the representation of women in the national delegations to the OSCE PA. The Resolution came as a response to the noted gender imbalance within national delegations, when only 73 out of 307 delegates (23.7%) were women. Furthermore, in 2011, 17 of the 57 national delegations to the OSCE PA comprised only men, with only 10 delegations headed by women in 2011.

After the 2011 resolution, the OSCE PA has started engaging more actively in fostering dialogue on topics related to gender equality not only within its own structures, but also in national parliaments. As a result, at the 2019 Luxembourg Annual Session, 2 out of the 15 in total adopted resolutions were focused on the issues pertaining to gender equality,<sup>83</sup> including the advantages of the digitalization process on gender policies and gender and youth-related considerations in climate change policy agendas.

The OSCE PA International Secretariat also cooperates actively with the OSCE institutions on joint gender-related initiatives and events. In 2023, the ODIHR and the OSCE PA launched

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<sup>80</sup> The reporting period of the data in the Section II of the report is 1 July 2023 to 1 June 2024.

<sup>81</sup> Also present in OSCE PA Rules of Procedure, 21 March 2020. Available at <https://www.oscepa.org/ru/dokumenty/rules-of-procedure/1832-rules-of-procedure-english/file>.

<sup>82</sup> OSCE PA Resolution on Women's Representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 20th Annual Session, 6-10 July 2011. Available at <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/annual-sessions/2011-belgrade/declaration-4/3030-belgrade-resolutions-eng/file>.

<sup>83</sup> See [OSCE PA 2019 Luxembourg Declaration](#).

the “Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments, a Step-by-Step Guidance Document”<sup>84</sup> at joint Web Dialogue on “Institutionalizing Gender Mainstreaming in Parliament: Participatory Gender Audits and Gender Action Plans.” The event brought together a diverse group of parliamentarians, diplomats, and civil society from the OSCE region to discuss the application of gender audits and gender action plans in parliaments.

Moreover, in 2023, the ODIHR and the OSCE PA distributed a joint survey on specialized parliamentary bodies for gender equality to all OSCE parliaments, with an aim to gather data and issue a joint publication in 2024.

In 2023, the OSCE PA and OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) hosted a joint online event on “Countering Online Violence against Women: OSCE Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists,” presenting the OSCE Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists and exploring the role of national parliaments in this regard. The event was attended by a diverse group of parliamentarians, diplomats, and civil society from the OSCE region.

In terms of participation of OSCE PA delegates in external events focused on gender equality, OSCE PA President Pia Kauma participated in the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office’s (CiO) “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Conference” in September 2023, as well as in the “Countering Online Violence: Guidelines for Monitoring Online Violence Against Female Journalists,” an event organized by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) during the OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension Conference in October 2023.

In 2024, to mark the International Women’s Day, the OSCE PA organized a “Under the Watchful Eye: Human Rights, Gender and Surveillance” event with CiO, ODIHR, RFoM and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)<sup>85</sup>. OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry (Canada) and OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella addressed the event.

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<sup>84</sup> OSCE ODIHR – OSCE PA Joint Publication. Participatory Gender Audits of Parliaments, a Step-by-Step Guidance Document. Available at: <https://www.oscepa.org/ru/dokumenty/special-representatives/gender-issues/report-17/4554-participatory-gender-audits-of-parliaments-a-step-by-step-guidance-document/file>.

<sup>85</sup> Please see <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2024/osce-pa-special-representative-on-gender-issues-and-secretary-general-speak-at-vienna-event-on-human-rights-gender-and-surveillance> for more info.

## A. MEMBER DIRECTORY STATISTICS

As in previous years, the membership of the OSCE PA continues to be dominated by men. The Assembly is composed of 161 women and 349 men. Hence, more than two thirds of OSCE PA Members (including Heads of Delegations, Members and Alternate Members) are men – 68%.

However, since the adoption of the Resolution on Women’s representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in 2011, the number of women representatives among Members continues to increase. As shown in **Figure 1**, female representation (including Heads of Delegation (HoD), Deputy Heads of Delegation (DHoD), Members and Alternate Members) at the Assembly as of June 2024 accounts for 31.57%, which is higher than last year (30.4%).<sup>86</sup>

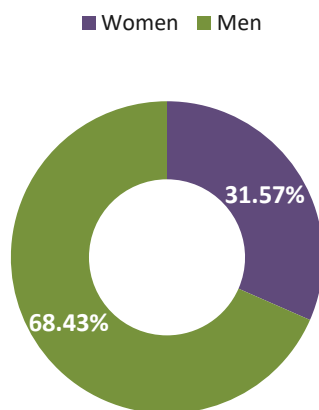


Figure 1 – Gender Balance of the OSCE PA Members (including HoD, DHoD, Members, Alternate Members) as of June 2024 (%)

## B. INITIATIVE TO BOOST WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION

In accordance with Article 1.4 of the OSCE PA Rules of Procedure<sup>87</sup>, national delegations should be striving to have both genders represented within each delegation. As visible in **Figure 2**, the number of male-only delegations decreased from 17 in 2011 to 10 in 2012 and

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<sup>86</sup> See Table A.1 in Appendix A.

<sup>87</sup> OSCE PA Rules of Procedure. Available at <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/rules-of-procedure/1832-rules-of-procedure-english/file>.

2013, and further to 9 in 2014, rising again to 10 in 2015 and going down to 6 in 2016 and 2017. Furthermore, the number of male-only delegations was the lowest – 2 – in 2018 and 2019. As of June 2024, only four countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovakia and Spain – have no women parliamentarians represented within their delegations.<sup>88</sup>

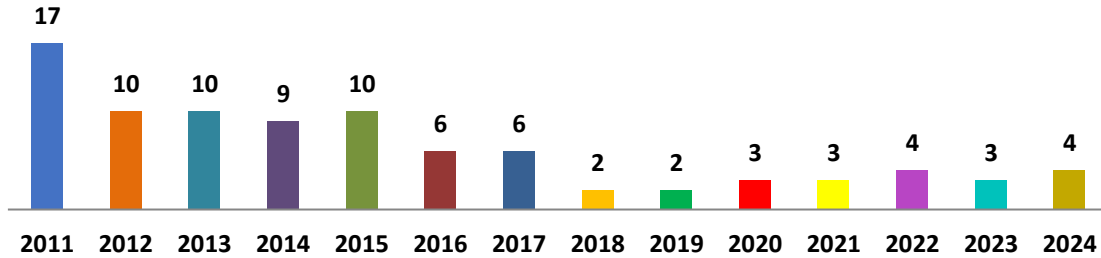


Figure 2 - Number of delegations with no female members (2011-2024) as of June 2024

Figure 3 below presents gender-disaggregated data of the Assembly including Members and Alternate Members.<sup>89</sup>



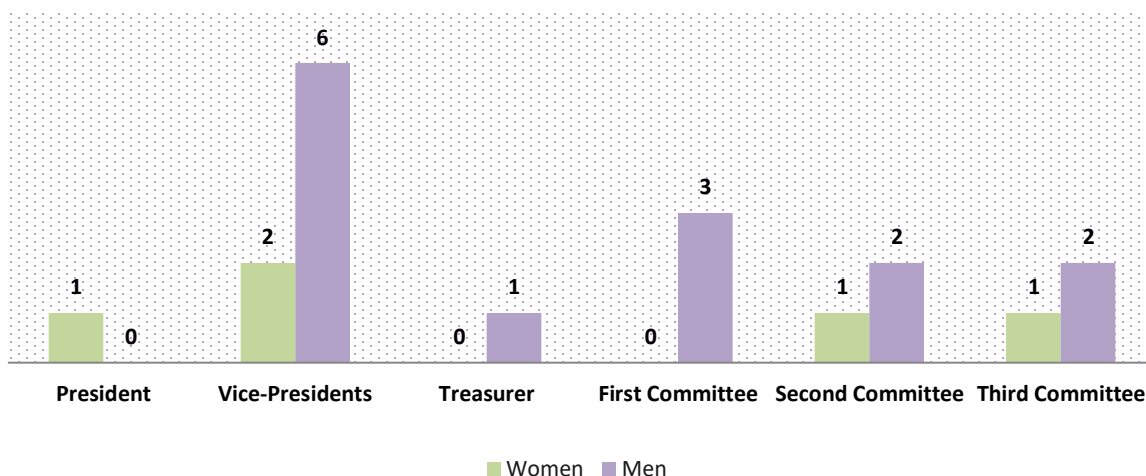
Figure 3 - OSCE PA gender-disaggregated as of June 2024

<sup>88</sup> See Table A.2 in Appendix A.

<sup>89</sup> See Table A.3 in Appendix A.

## C. GENDER BALANCE IN THE OSCE PA BUREAU

The Bureau of the OSCE PA is composed of the President, 8 Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer, as well as the three Officers of each of the General Committees. As of June 2024, the Bureau consists of 19 members – 5 of whom are female – providing for a 73.68% to 26.32% ratio in favour of male members. This percentage was the same in 2023 and 2022. Compared to the 2021 gender disaggregated data of the Bureau members, there was a 1.46% decrease in the female representation which stayed at the same level in 2023. As shown in **Figure 4**, in 2024, female representation in the Bureau remains below the targeted goal of 30% suggested in 2011.<sup>90</sup>



**Figure 4 – Gender Balance of OSCE PA Bureau Members as of June 2024**

### 1. Female Presidents and Vice-Presidents in the OSCE PA

At the 2023 Annual Session, Pia Kauma was elected President, becoming the fourth woman to hold the post. However, the gender balance among the positions of OSCE PA Presidents and Vice-Presidents has varied throughout the years. Between 1992 and 2024, the post of the President was predominantly held by men – 15 men and 4 women served as the OSCE PA Presidents during this period. At the 2021 Annual Session, Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden) was elected President – becoming the third woman to hold that post, succeeding Ms.

<sup>90</sup> See Table A.4 in Appendix A.

Christine Muttonen (Austria, 2016–2017) and Helle Degn (1998–2000). She held the post for 2 years (including one reappointment).

## 2. Officers of the OSCE PA General Committees

Following the 2023 Annual Session, gender representation among the Officers of the Assembly’s General Committees remains male-dominated – 7 Officers are men and only 2 are women.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the balance remained the same as in 2022 and 2023. For comparison, in June 2021, female members held 3 out of the total 9 Committee Officer posts, previously holding 4 positions in 2019 and 2 positions in 2018.

## 3. OSCE PA Special Representatives

According to the OSCE PA Rules of Procedure, the President may appoint special representatives to act on his or her behalf, including by engaging in dialogue and participating in activities aimed at promoting the aims of the Assembly. Each year, the number of Special Representatives varies depending on the needs of the Assembly to address certain topics. As of June 2024, there are 14 Special Representatives, out of which are 5 (35.7%) are women (see **Figure 5**).<sup>92</sup> Their term is envisaged for one year with a possibility of extension.

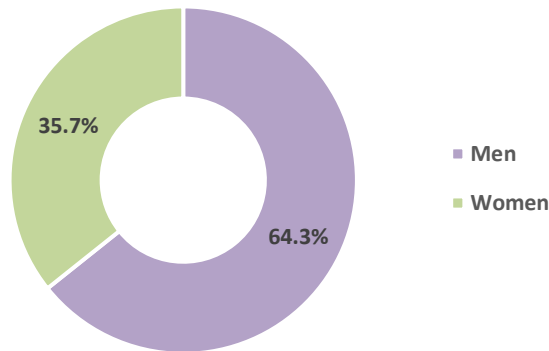


Figure 5 – Gender Balance of OSCE PA Special Representatives as of June 2024 (%)

<sup>91</sup> See Table A.4 in Appendix A.

<sup>92</sup> See Table A.5 in Appendix A.

## D. FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE STATUTORY MEETINGS

### 1. 2023 Annual Session

The number of women parliamentarians participating in the Annual Sessions has been constantly growing. As shown in **Figure 6**, 220 Members participated in the 2023 OSCE PA Annual Session in Vancouver, out of which 75 were women (34.25%) and 145 were men parliamentarians.<sup>93</sup> In 2022, 31.06% participants were women, while in 2021 the percentage reached 27.80%.<sup>94</sup>

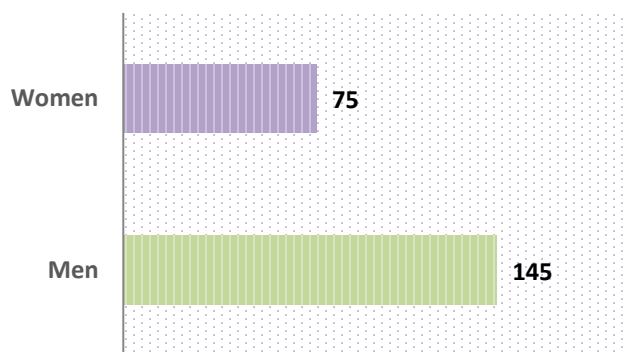


Figure 6 – Gender Breakdown of Parliamentarian Participation in the OSCE PA 2023 Annual Session in Vancouver

### 2. 2023 Autumn Meeting

In total, 165 Members participated in the 2023 Autumn Meeting in Yerevan, out of which 55 (33.33%) were women and 115 men.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See Table A.6 in Appendix A.

<sup>94</sup> See Table A.6.1 in Appendix A.

<sup>95</sup> See Table A.7 in Appendix A.



Figure 7 - Gender Breakdown of Parliamentarian Participation in the OSCE PA 2023 Autumn Meeting

### 3. 2024 Winter Meeting

In total, 219 Members and Alternate Members participated, out of which 67 (30.59%) were women and 152 were men.<sup>96</sup>

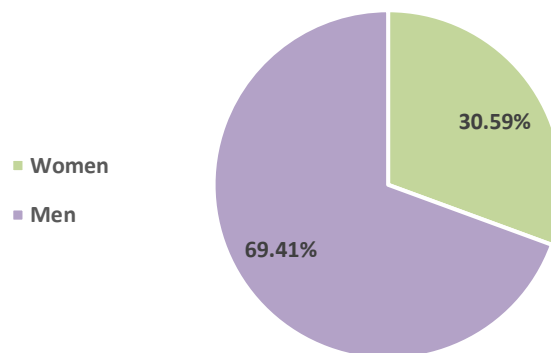


Figure 8 - Gender Breakdown of Parliamentarians' Participation in the OSCE PA 2024 Winter Meeting (%)

<sup>96</sup> See Table A.8 in Appendix A.

## E. FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE OSCE PA AD HOC COMMITTEES

Female participation in Ad Hoc committees has varied throughout the years. As of June 2024, there are four Ad Hoc Committees within the OSCE PA: Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism, Ad Hoc Committee on Migration, Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine and Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure. As visible in the **Figure 9** below, women make less than 50% of all four Committees.<sup>97</sup>

A.9 Participation in OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees			
As of 1 June 2024			
	MPs	Women	% of Women
Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism	14	5	35.72%
Ad Hoc Committee on Migration	21	9	42.86%
Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine	23	9	39.13%
Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure	13	5	39.44%

Figure 9 – Female Participation in the OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees as of June 2024 (%)

## F. FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE OSCE PA ELECTION MONITORING 2023–2024

During the July 2023 – June 2024 reporting period, the overall number of female parliamentarians participating in the OSCE Election Observation Missions (EOMs) was 66, representing 27.62% of the total number of observers deployed (239). **Figure 10** shows the gender breakdown of five EOMs which took place in the reporting period.<sup>98</sup>

A.10 Participation in OSCE PA Election Observation Missions (EOMs)			
1 July 2023 - 1 June 2024			
Elections Observed	MPs	Women	% of Women
Parliamentary elections, Poland (15.10.2023)	74	21	23.38%
Parliamentary elections, Serbia (17.12.2023)	50	17	34.00%
Presidential election, Azerbaijan (07.02.2024)	61	14	22.95%
Parliamentary and 2nd Round Presidential elections, North Macedonia (08.05.2024)	54	14	25.93%
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>27.62%</b>

Figure 10 – Female Participation in the OSCE PA Election Monitoring 2023–2024 (%)

<sup>97</sup> See Table A.9 in Appendix A.

<sup>98</sup> See Table A.10 in Appendix A.

## G. ONSITE AND ONLINE EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Apart from the Statutory Meetings, the OSCE PA has been initiating and co-organizing both onsite and online events in co-operation with national delegations and the OSCE institutions.

The OSCE PA currently has two informal networks – the OSCE PA Informal network of young parliamentarians and the OSCE PA Informal gender network that bring together proactive parliamentarians to identify key issues in the OSCE area and find new ways for co-operation, share best practices and try to tackle acute challenges in the OSCE region.

### 1. Informal Network of Young Parliamentarians

With an aim to bring together Members under 40 years of age, the OSCE PA's informal network of young parliamentarians was launched at the initiative of young members of parliamentarians in Washington, DC, in 2020. During the reporting period, the network has met once in Vienna, during the Winter Meeting, on 21 February 2024. At this meeting, almost half of the participants were women – 47.37% (please see **Figure 11** below).

In the previous reporting period from July 2022 to June 2023<sup>99</sup>, the network has held four meetings – at the Annual Session in Birmingham (3 July 2022), in Yerevan (12–14 November 2022), in Warsaw (24 November 2022), and prior to the Winter Meeting in Vienna (21 February 2023).

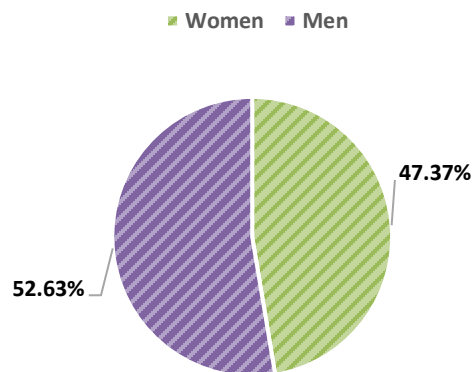


Figure 11: Participation in the meetings of the Informal Network of Young Parliamentarians 2023–2024 (%)

<sup>99</sup> 1 July 2022 – 1 June 2023.

## 2. Informal gender network

On 27 October 2022, OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Dr. Hedy Fry launched the OSCE PA's Informal gender network, bringing together a diverse group of parliamentarians for the first of a series of discussions on gender equality in the OSCE region. Through informal interactions among parliamentarians, the initiative aims to identify areas where gender progress has been made, along with the key obstacles preventing the fulsome realization of gender equality in the OSCE region, as well as within the OSCE PA and other OSCE structures, including the focus on Women, Peace and Security.

Under Dr. Fry's leadership, the Informal gender network has met through four online sessions<sup>100</sup> of discussion on 27 October 2022, 25 January 2023, 26 May 2023 and 23 January 2024 and will continue its activity, supporting the work of the Special Representative. Overall, there were many more women participating in these meetings (82.17%) than men. The data regarding Members' participation in the Informal gender network meetings is visible on the **Figure 12** below.<sup>101</sup>

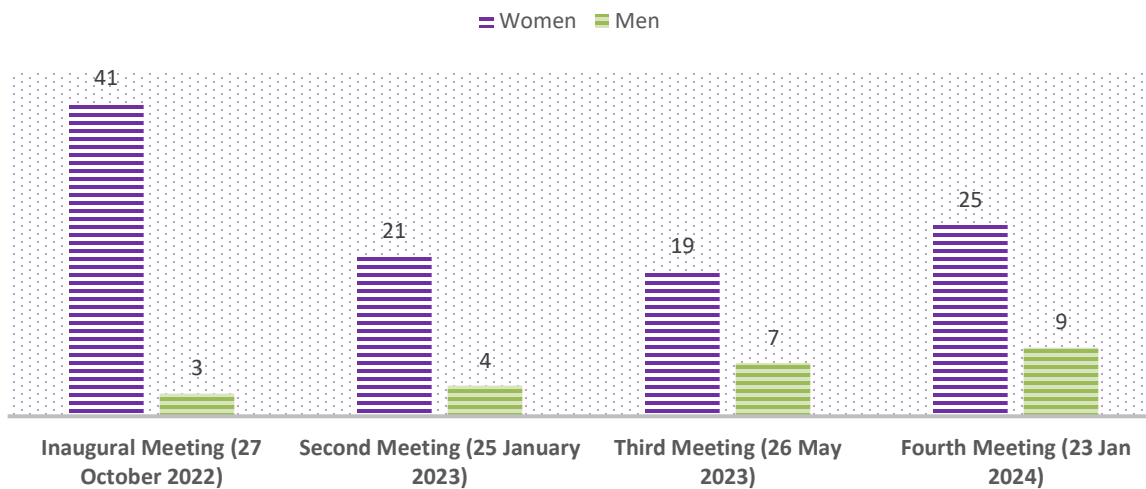


Figure 12: Participation in the meetings of the Informal gender network (2022–2024)

<sup>100</sup> Since its establishment until 1 June 2024.

<sup>101</sup> See Table A.12 in Appendix A.

### 3. Call for Action – Helsinki + 50 Initiative

In 2020, with the intention of mobilizing national parliamentary delegations toward discussing the issues faced by the OSCE in general, the Bureau endorsed the Call for Action (CfA) – Helsinki + 50 process. The main aim of this initiative is to underline the relevance of the OSCE in the current international security framework, both by the parliaments and governments, and having in mind the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *Helsinki Final Act*.<sup>102</sup> The project includes the CfA document<sup>103</sup> and a series of targeted meetings and events.

On the basis of the CfA, a Non-Paper which lays out in more detail the main challenges the OSCE is facing, was developed. Following this, a number of targeted meetings were scheduled to address each of the points contained in the Non-Paper and discuss how the PA can contribute more specifically. Such events continued to be held throughout 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, mainly online or in hybrid format.

In the reporting period of July 2023 – June 2024, one CfA meeting was organized, bringing together 37 participants, out of which 20 were women (54.05%).<sup>104</sup>

### 4. Participation in the OSCE PA-wide Events 2023–2024

Three OSCE PA-wide events (events open to the entire Assembly) were held between 1 July 2023 and 1 June 2024. These include:

1. Call for Action – Helsinki +50 meeting: update on the situation in Ukraine (12 July 2024);
2. Leinsweiler Seminar (19-20 April 2024);
3. Lisbon Conference of the OSCE PA (20 May 2024).

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<sup>102</sup> OSCE PA One-Pager: Call for Action – Helsinki +50 Process: A Parliamentary Contribution to Restoring OSCE Effectiveness. Available at <https://www.oscepa.org/en/documents/osce-call-for-action/4141-one-pager-call-for-action-helsinki-50-process/file>.

<sup>103</sup> Available at: <https://www.oscepa.org/documents/osce-call-for-action>.

<sup>104</sup> See Table A.13 in Appendix A.

**Figure 13** shows the data regarding parliamentarians’ participation in these events.<sup>105</sup>

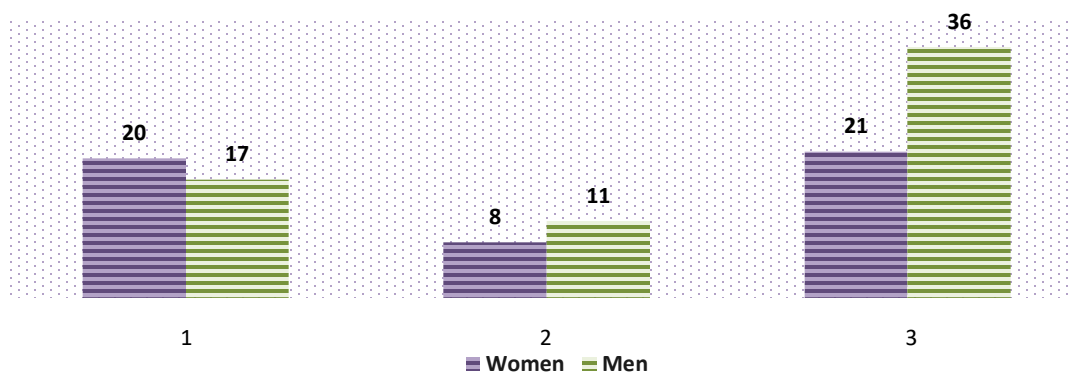


Figure 13 - Participation in the OSCE PA-wide Events 2023–2024

## PART II: GENDER BALANCE IN THE OSCE PA INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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### A. PERMANENT STAFF

As shown in **Figure 14**, the permanent staff of the OSCE PA International Secretariat, in Copenhagen and Vienna offices, is currently composed of a Secretary General and 24 individuals – 12 men and 12 women.<sup>106</sup> The posts of the OSCE PA Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General are held by men. Changes to Senior Management positions were introduced after the 2021 Annual Session to provide for better gender balance at senior level of decision-making.

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<sup>105</sup> See Table A.14 in Appendix A.

<sup>106</sup> See Table A.15 in Appendix A.

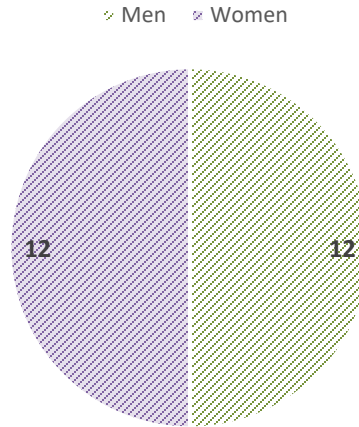


Figure 14 – Gender composition of the OSCE PA International Secretariat Permanent Staff as of June 2024

## B. RESEARCH ASSISTANT PROGRAMME

The OSCE PA International Secretariat’s Research Assistant Programme regularly engages recent graduates up to the age of 28 in its daily work and activities for a period of six months. Through this programme, Research Assistants gain practical experience in the field of international affairs, develop their knowledge of international politico-military, economic and environmental, and human rights affairs and build their professional skills in areas related to the work of the OSCE PA. As of June 2024, there were 3 Research Assistants working at the International Secretariat in Copenhagen, and 4 in the Vienna Office – in total 1 male and 6 female.

## FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS OF OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES

As per the data provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), female representation in OSCE participating States’ parliaments has fluctuated in recent years. Total female representation in the legislative bodies of OSCE participating States amounted to 29% in 2020, 38% in 2021, 30.75% in 2022 and 30.75% in 2023. As of 30 April 2024,<sup>107</sup> the figure was 30.87%.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> At the time of the drafting of the report, the latest available data referred to April 2024.

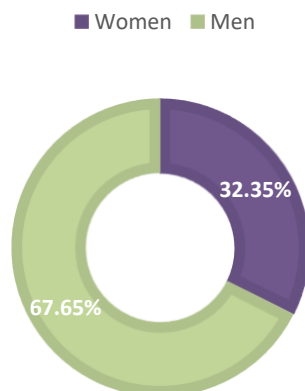
<sup>108</sup> See Table A.16 in Appendix A.

Within the OSCE region, Cyprus remains the country with the lowest percentage of female parliamentarians (14.29%), followed by Hungary (14.57%). On the contrary, Andorra (50%), reported the highest female representation in its legislative body, followed by Iceland (47.62%), Sweden (46.71%) and Finland (46%).

## **GENDER BALANCE AMONG THE VIENNA-BASED AMBASSADORS AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

This final section demonstrates the gender composition among the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to the OSCE Permanent Council based in Vienna as of June 2024.<sup>109</sup> It includes the Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives of the 57 participating States, the EU Ambassador, the Ambassadors of the 11 OSCE Partners for Co-Operation and the Ambassador of the OSCE PA to the Permanent Council.<sup>110</sup>

As presented in **Figure 15**, 67.65% of the ambassadors are men, while 32.35% are women. Compared to June 2023, the number of female representatives increased by 1.92%.



**Figure 15 – Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to the OSCE Permanent Council as of June 2024 (%)**

<sup>109</sup> See Table A.17 in Appendix A.

<sup>110</sup> As of 1 June 2024, United States of America and Ukraine do not have their Ambassador/Permanent Representative appointed to the OSCE Permanent Council.

## APPENDIX A

Table A.1

A.1 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Composition				
as of 1 June 2024				
	Women	Men	Women In %	Total
OSCE PA Members	161	349	31.57%	510

Table A.2

A.2 Number of delegations with no female members (2011-2024)	
as of 1 June 2024	
2013	10
2014	9
2015	10
2016	6
2017	6
2018	2
2019	2
2020	3
2021	3
2022	4
2023	3
2024	4

Table A.3

A.3 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Composition Breakdown				
as of 1 June 2024				
	Women	Men	Women In %	Total
OSCE PA Members	95	218	30.35%	313
OSCE PA Alternate Members	66	131	33.51%	197
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>31.57%</b>	<b>510</b>

Table A.4

<b>A.4 Gender Balance of Bureau Members</b>			
as of 1 June 2024			
	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
President	1	0	1
Vice-Presidents	2	6	8
Treasurer	0	1	1
First Committee	0	3	3
Second Committee	1	2	3
Third Committee	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>

Table A.5

<b>A.5 Gender Balance of OSCE PA Special Representatives</b>		
as of 1 June 2024		
	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and Intolerance	1	
Special Representative for the Arctic and High North	1	
Special Representative on Central Asia		1
Special Representative on Climate Change	1	
Special Representative on Combating organized crime	1	
Special Representative on Eastern Europe	1	
Special Representative on Fighting Corruption		1
Special Representative on Gender Issues		1
Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues	1	
Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs	1	
Special Representative on Political Prisoners	1	
Special Representative on South Caucasus		1
Special Representative on South East Europe	1	
Special Representative on Youth Engagement		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>

Table A.6

<b>A.6 Participation in the OSCE PA 2023 Annual Session in Vancouver</b>	
Total Men	145
Total Women	75

<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>
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Table A.6.1

<b>A.6.1 Participation in the OSCE PA Annual Sessions (2010-2023)</b>														
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 <sup>111</sup>	2021 remote	2022	2023
Women	50	55	61	67	74	63	75	60	79	70	-	100	73	75
Men	186	169	185	178	180	182	205	173	202	200	-	240	163	145
% Women	21%	24.50%	25%	27%	29%	25.70%	26.80%	25.70%	28%	26%	-	29.40%	31.06%	34.25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>220</b>

Table A.7

<b>A.7 Participation in the OSCE PA Autumn Meeting in Yerevan (2023)</b>	
Women	55
Men	110
% Women	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>

Table A.8

<b>A.8 Participation in the OSCE PA Winter Meeting in Vienna (2024)</b>	
Women	67
Men	152
% Women	30.59%
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>

Table A.9

<b>A.9 Participation in OSCE PA Ad Hoc Committees</b>			
<b>As of 1 June 2024</b>			
	<b>MPs</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>% of Women</b>
Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism	14	5	35.72%
Ad Hoc Committee on Migration	21	9	42.86%

<sup>111</sup> Cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Parliamentary Support Team for Ukraine	23	9	39.13%
Sub-Committee on Rules of Procedure	13	5	39.44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>27.62%</b>

Table A.10

A.10 Participation in OSCE PA Election Observation Missions (EOMs)			
1 July 2023 - 1 June 2024			
Elections Observed	MPs	Women	% of Women
Parliamentary elections, Poland (15.10.2023)	74	21	23.38%
Parliamentary elections, Serbia (17.12.2023)	50	17	34.00%
Presidential election, Azerbaijan (07.02.2024)	61	14	22.95%
Parliamentary and 2nd Round Presidential elections, North Macedonia (08.05.2024)	54	14	25.93%
<b>Total</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>27.62%</b>

Table A.11

A.11 Participation in the meetings of the Informal Network of Young Parliamentarians				
1 July 2023 - 1 June 2024				
List of meetings	MPs	Women	Men	% of Women
Vienna Meeting (21 February 2024)	19	9	10	47.37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>47.37%</b>

Table A.12

A.12 Participation in the meetings of the Informal gender network				
1 July 2022 - 1 June 2024				
List of meetings	MPs	Women	Men	% of Women
Inaugural meeting (27 October 2022)	44	41	3	93.18%
Second meeting (25 January 2023)	25	21	4	84%
Third meeting (26 May 2023)	26	19	7	73.08%
Fourth meeting (23 January 2024)	34	25	9	73.58%
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>82.17%</b>

Table A.13

A.13 Participation in the meetings of Call for Action (CfA) - Helsinki + 50 initiative			
1 July 2023 - 1 June 2024			

List of meetings	MPs	Women	Men	% of Women
CfA Helsinki +50 event: Future challenges in the OSCE	37	20	17	54.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>54.05%</b>

Table A.14

A.14 Participation in the OSCE-wide Events				
1 July 2023 - 1 June 2024				
List of meetings	MPs	Women	Men	% of Women
CfA Helsinki +50 event: Future challenges in the OSCE (12 July 2023)	37	20	17	54.05%
Leinsweiler Seminar (19-20 April 2024)	19	8	11	42.11%
International Parliamentary Conference on Security in the Age of Artificial Intelligence in Lisbon (20 May 2024)	57	21	36	36.84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>43.36%</b>

Table A.15

A.15 Composition of the OSCE PA International Secretariat Permanent Staff	
as of 1 June 2024	
Women	12
Men	12

Table A.16

A.16 Women in Parliaments in the OSCE participating States (based on the IPU data)				
As of 30 April 2024				
	MPs	Women	Men	% of Women
<b>Total</b>	<b>14482</b>	<b>4470</b>	<b>10012</b>	<b>30.87%</b>

Table A.17

A.17 Gender Balance Among the Vienna-Based Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives to the OSCE Permanent Council by Country	
as of 1 June 2024	

Participating State	Participating States with a Male Ambassador/Permanent Representative	Participating States with a Female Ambassador/Permanent Representative
Albania	0	1
Andorra	1	0
Armenia	1	0
Austria	1	0
Azerbaijan	1	0
Belarus	1	0
Belgium	1	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1
Bulgaria	0	1
Canada	0	1
Croatia	1	0
Cyprus	1	0
Czech Republic	1	0
Denmark	1	0
Estonia	0	1
Finland	1	0
France	0	1
Georgia	0	1
Germany	0	1
Greece	1	0
Holy See	1	0
Hungary	1	0
Iceland	0	1
Ireland	0	1
Italy	1	0
Kazakhstan	1	0
Kyrgyzstan	1	0
Latvia	0	1
Liechtenstein	0	1
Lithuania	1	0
Luxemburg	1	0
Malta	0	1
Moldova	0	1
Monaco	1	0

<b>Mongolia</b>	1	0
<b>Montenegro</b>	1	0
<b>Netherlands</b>	1	0
<b>North Macedonia</b>	1	0
<b>Norway</b>	0	1
<b>Poland</b>	1	0
<b>Portugal</b>	1	0
<b>Romania</b>	1	0
<b>Russian Federation</b>	1	0
<b>San Marino</b>	0	1
<b>Serbia</b>	1	0
<b>Slovakia</b>	1	0
<b>Slovenia</b>	0	1
<b>Spain</b>	1	0
<b>Sweden</b>	0	1
<b>Switzerland</b>	1	0
<b>Tajikistan</b>	1	0
<b>United Kingdom</b>	1	0
<b>United States</b>	/	/
<b>Turkey</b>	0	1
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	1	0
<b>Ukraine</b>	/	/
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	1	0
<b>European Union</b>	0	1
<b>Afghanistan (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	0	1
<b>Algeria (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Australia (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Egypt (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Israel (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Japan (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Jordan (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Morocco (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Republic of Korea (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>Thailand (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	0	1
<b>Tunisia (Partner for Co-operation)</b>	1	0
<b>OSCE PA</b>	1	0

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>22</b>
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