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ФЕДЕРАЛИСТСКИЙ СОЮЗ ЕВРОПЕЙСКИХ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ  
UNION FÉDÉRALISTE DES COMMUNAUTÉS ETHNIQUES EUROPÉENNES

# WOMEN OF MINORITIES PROJECT SURVEY FINDINGS



# Impressum

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# WOMEN OF MINORITIES PROJECT – SURVEY FINDINGS



DR ZORA POPOVA

**D**edicated to promoting the rights of the national, ethnic, and autochthonous minorities and language groups across Europe, supporting the development of their organisational capacities, and amplifying the voices of diversity before national and international institutions, FUEN has identified an area that calls for attention – the intersectionality and multiple forms of discrimination that constitute women of (some) minorities among the most vulnerable groups in present days.

Raising awareness about intersectionality and multiple forms of discrimination and engaging in the fight against them is a challenge that FUEN must address to ensure that both minority men and women, boys and girls, fully enjoy their rights as equal citizens of European societies. The survey, conducted among the FUEN member organisations in November 2022, was the launch of the new programme line “Women of Minorities”. The purpose of the survey was to screen the level of and the attitudes towards gender equality across the network so that with an increased understanding of the status quo, the minority organisation can engage in a constructive discussion about the ways forward.

The questionnaire was fully ANONYMOUS because its purpose was not to “blame and shame” but to outline the engagement of the FUEN member organisations with the topic and whether they adhere to and implement the gender equality principles in their work. Presenting and discussing the preliminary survey findings, the current report points out some of the identified challenges to equality and active participation of women of minorities. It outlines the areas of potential future FUEN intervention.

## SURVEY SCOPE AND PARTICIPANTS

For only 20 days, the FUEN survey collected 60 completed forms, covering 17 European states and one country from Central Asia. The graphs below visualise the geographic scope (Figure 1) and the number of participating organisations per state (Figure 2). Based on the numbers, FUEN has established that the survey reached out to organisations beyond the direct network members. Surprisingly, 25 of the replies came from Kazakhstan only, which shows a significant interest in and engagement with the topic.

To avoid misinterpretation of the overall situation, resulting from the high number of replies coming from one country only, the analysis took into consideration the information submit-

ted by the three organisations from Kazakhstan that have provided (voluntarily) their contact details at the end of the questionnaires – one being a FUEN member organisation and the two others, its affiliates. The reasons for analysing the replies from the non-members alongside the members are:

- › FUEN has detected that non-member organisations from other states have also participated in the survey (based on the number of MOs from a state vs the number of respondents from the same country)
- › The survey has reached the non-members since FUEN members have disseminated it further among its affiliates (which therefore are also a part of the extended FUEN network)
- › All replies come from organisations representing national, ethnic, autochthonous minorities and language groups and therefore belong to the initially identified target group.



Figure 1 Geographic scope

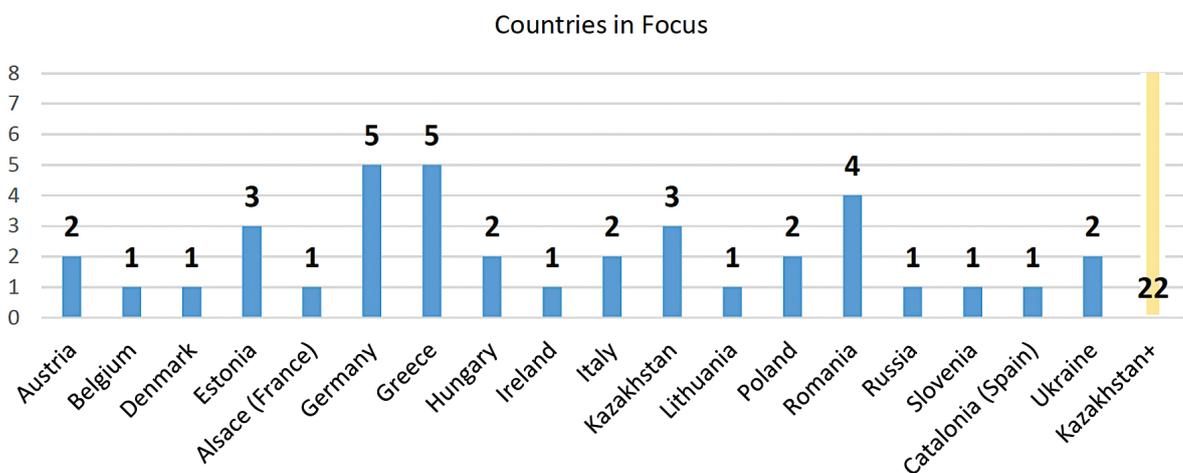


Figure 2 Number of respondents per state

Among the goals of the survey was to establish whether there is a correlation between the type of settlements where the organisations are based and the years of their existence (Figure 3) from one side, and the different approaches to gender equality, on the other. The preliminary findings have indicated that organisations declaring that in their institutional history, there has never been a woman in a leading position (in a governing body or at the top management level) are based in rural areas and small cities.

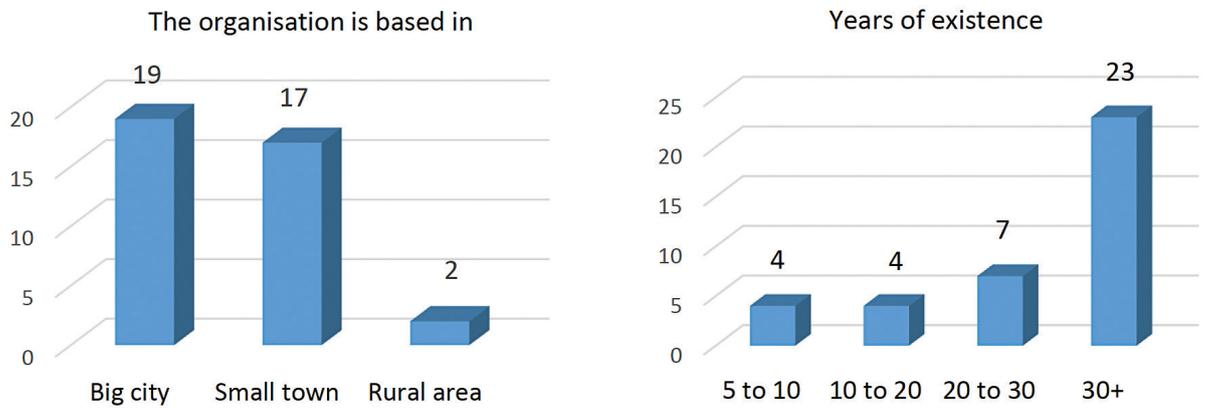


Figure 3 Type of location & Years of the existence of the organisations

Similarly, the question about the organisational type (Figure 4) aimed to enable the identification of factors underlying any potential differences, but also the number of respondents within which structures there might be women organisations present (Figure 5). As the replies revealed, the only organisation that has declared it a "women's organisation" is affiliated with a political party (the second being a FUEN member). None of the FUEN members participating in the survey declared that they are women's organisation.

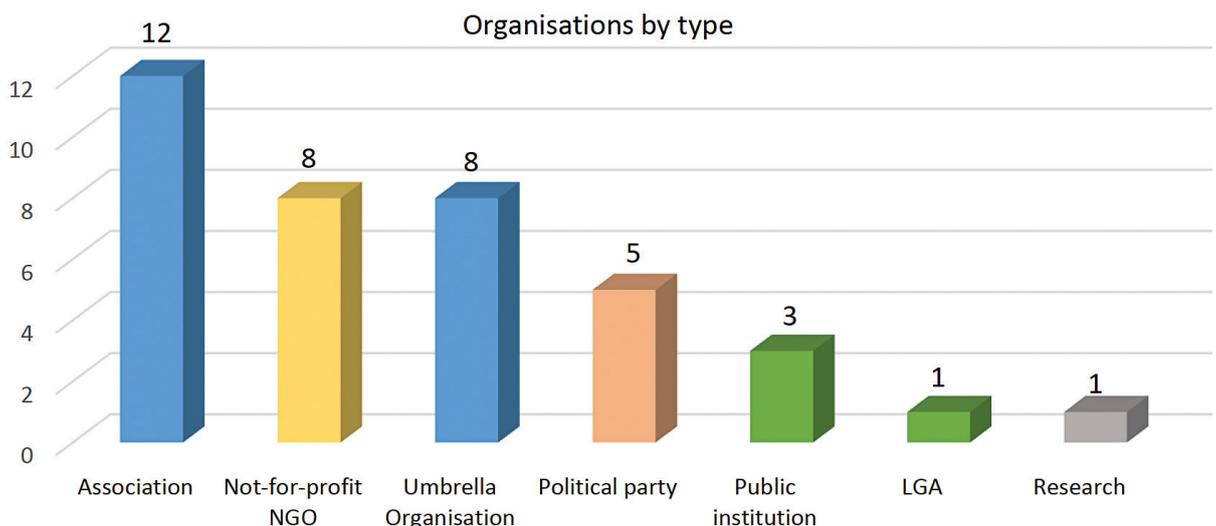
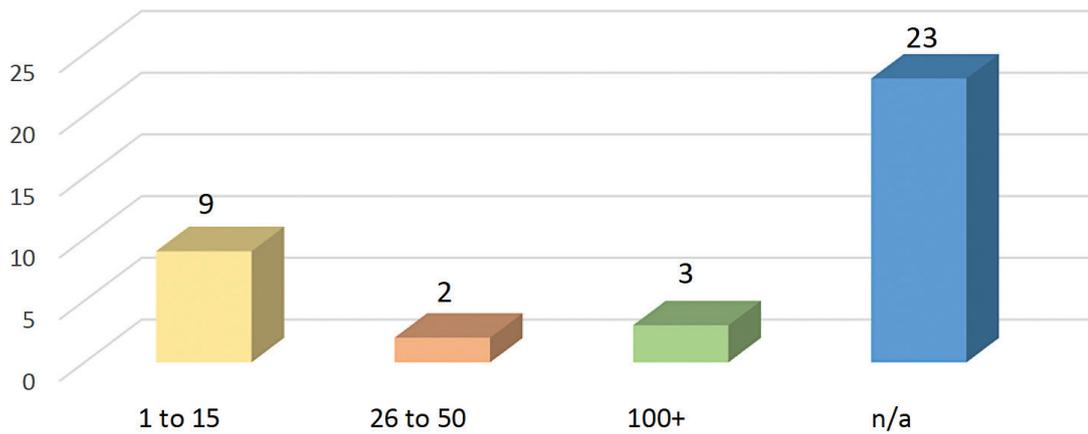


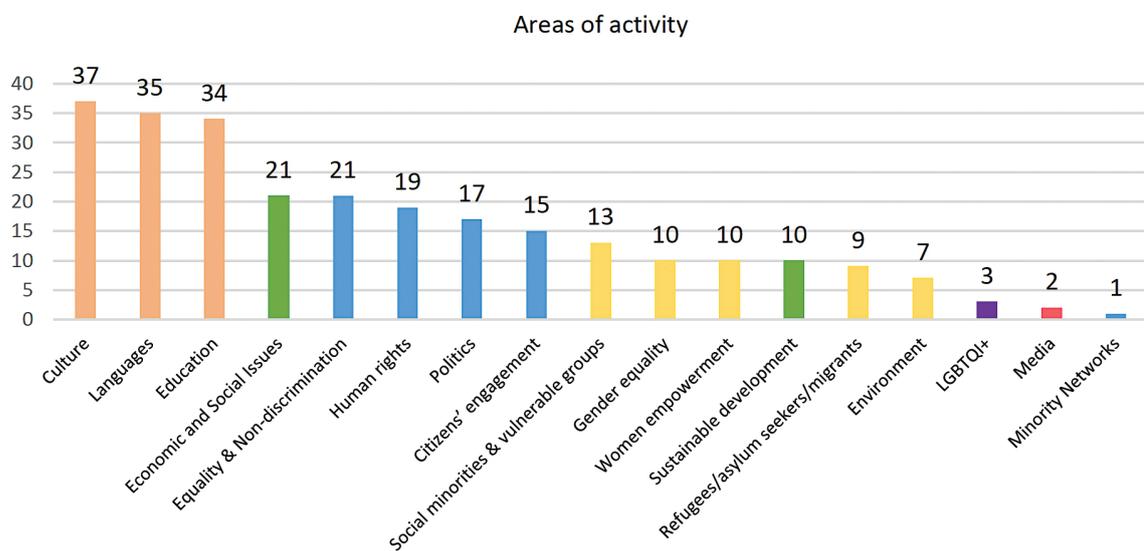
Figure 4 Organisations by type

### Member organisations within umbrella-structures



**Figure 5 Members in umbrella organisations**

Finally, the areas of activity of the MOs were also screened as a factor for potentially identified differences. Although the current survey did not prove such a correlation, it was interesting to find out that alongside the topics of culture, language and education that concern the minority structures and their representatives, the issues of equality and human rights, political participation, sustainable development and economy, environment and media are also among the areas of interest and activities of the minority organisations. A positive fact in the context of the thematic line of the current survey is that 20 out of 38 respondents declare that gender equality and women's issues are the focus of their regular activities (Figure 6).



**Figure 6 Areas of activity**

## WOMEN IN INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP

The second set of questions aimed at establishing the women's involvement (past and present) in the institutional set-up and functioning. The survey findings indicate that 27 out of them have among the founders of the civic structures, representing, promoting and defending the interests of the people belonging to the national, ethnic, autochthonous minorities and language groups in Europe (Figure 7). As visualised in Figure 8 and Figure 9, women have been and are represented among the members of the top management of minority organisations both in the past and nowadays. However, looking at the charts, it is visible that in present times the number of organisations headed by men exceeds significantly the number of organisations led by women.

Women among founders of organisations

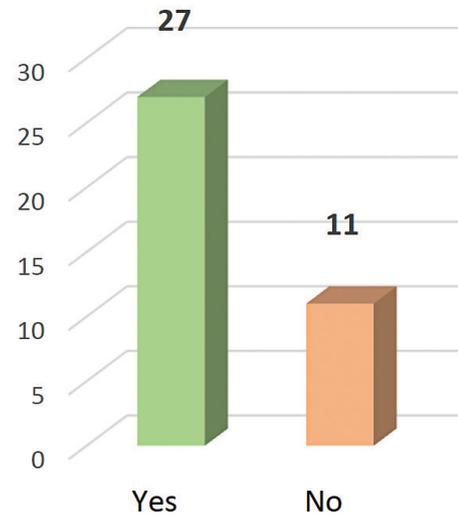
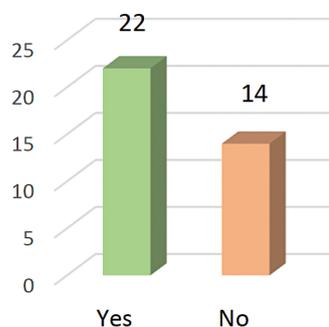


Figure 7 Women among founders of minority organisations

Organisations headed by women in the past



Number of women heading the organisations since their establishment

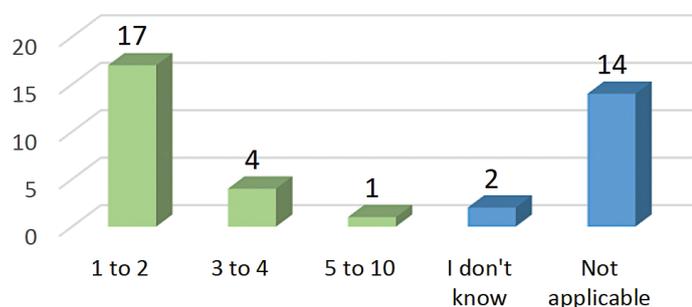


Figure 8 Women in the lead (past)

It is interesting to note that in small organisations (with about 2 to 4 people in the lead), there is a greater gender balance than in the larger organisations, where the number of men is greater than the number of women (Figure 10). Figure 11 and Figure 12 confirm the conclusion that the larger the organisation is, the greater the gender misbalance – the number of men at the different management levels is larger than the number of women.

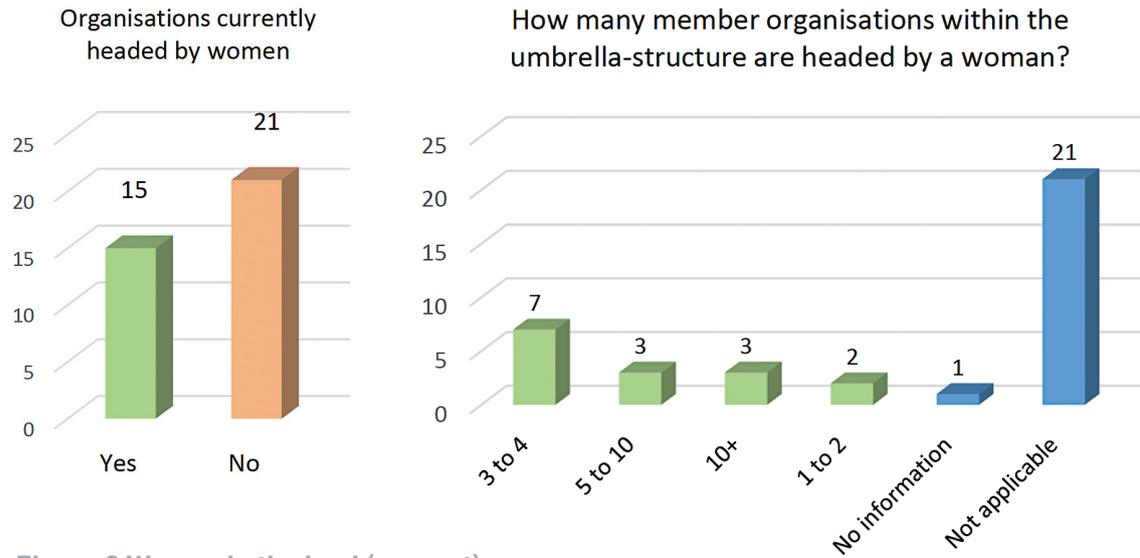


Figure 9 Women in the lead (present)

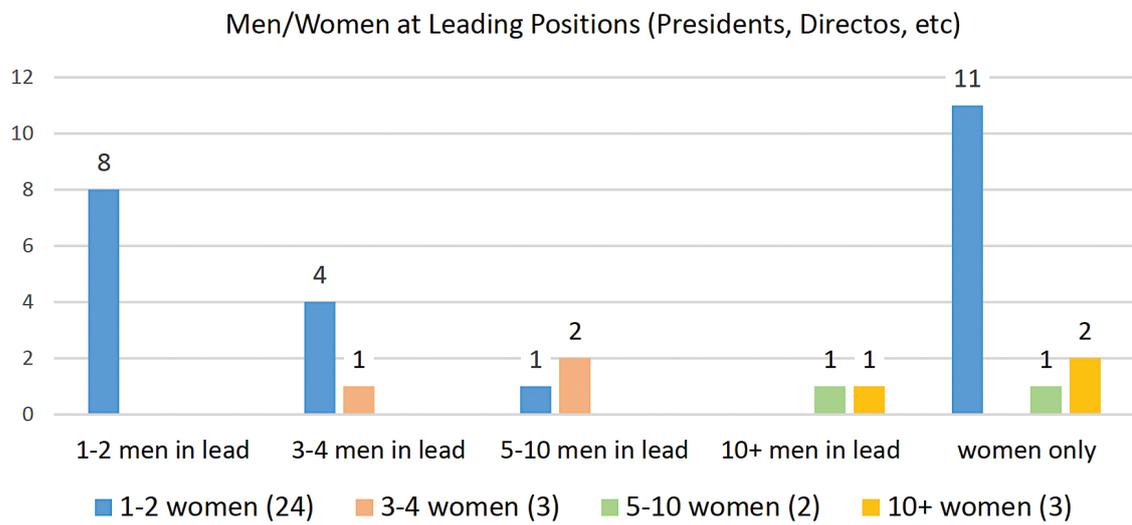


Figure 10 Women in management

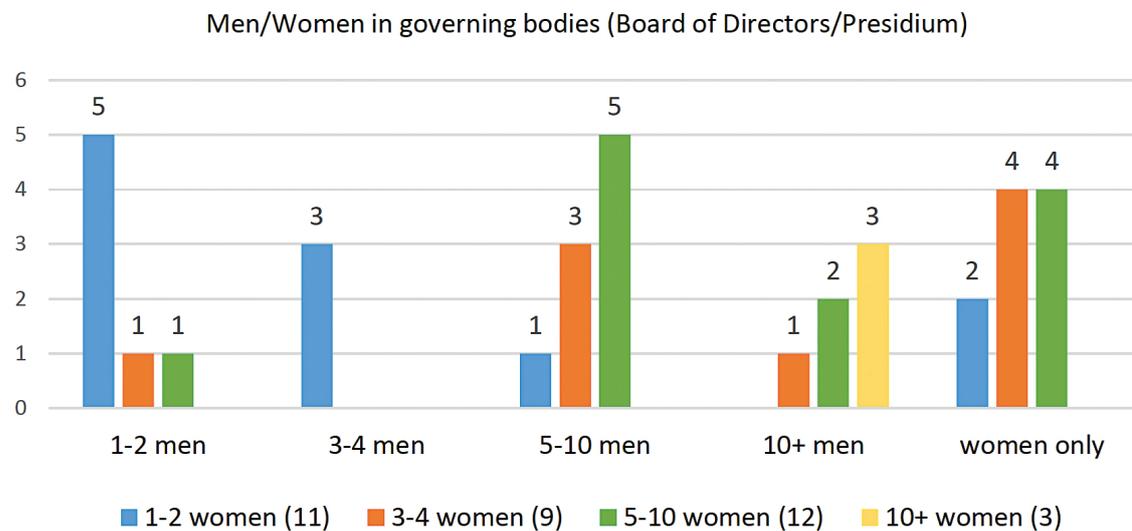
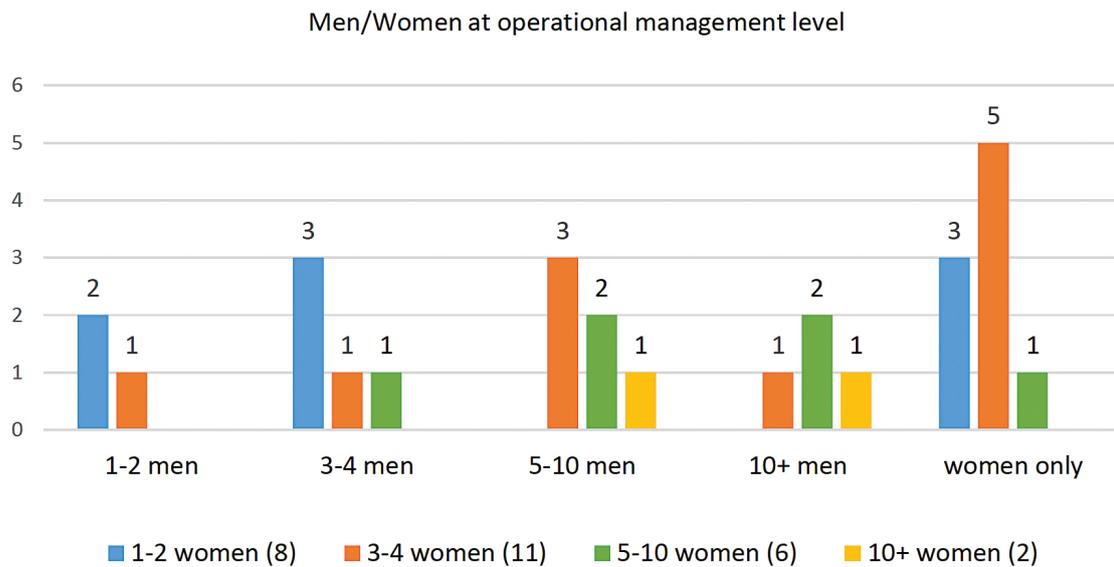
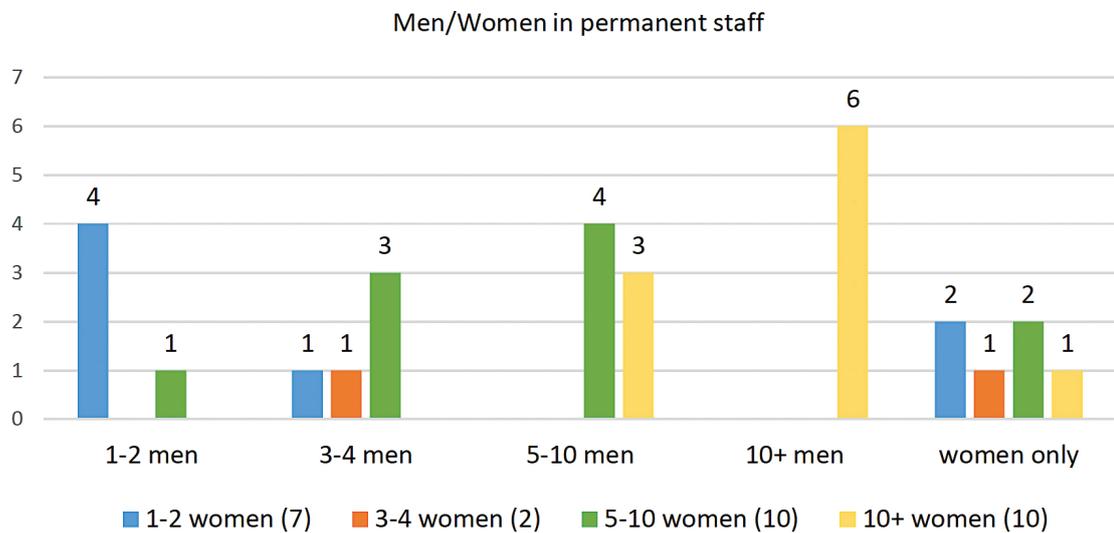


Figure 11 Men/Women in governing bodies



**Figure 12 Men/Women at the operational management level**

The survey, however, has revealed that the number of women among the permanent staff of the organisations is greater than the number of men involved (Figure 13). Hence, a preliminary conclusion based on the survey findings is that mainly women are tasked with the job, while the men are in the lead and, quite often – the “faces” and the representatives of the minority organisations.



**Figure 13 Men/Women in permanent staff**

## POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The third section of the survey aimed to establish to what extent the minority organisations are familiar with the national and European/international regulatory frameworks, policies, and institutions protecting and promoting gender equality.

The findings suggest that the minority representatives are well aware and informed about the existing legislation and institutions at both national (Figure 14) and European/international levels (Figure 15). And yet, although ca 67% of the organisations are familiar with the legislation and 81% with the institutions at a national level, a significant percentage of the organisations have indicated a need for such knowledge (33% and 19%, respectively). Similar is the situation concerning the existing awareness of European and international instruments and institutions. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of respondents have indicated that their knowledge of the European structures needs to be improved (33%).

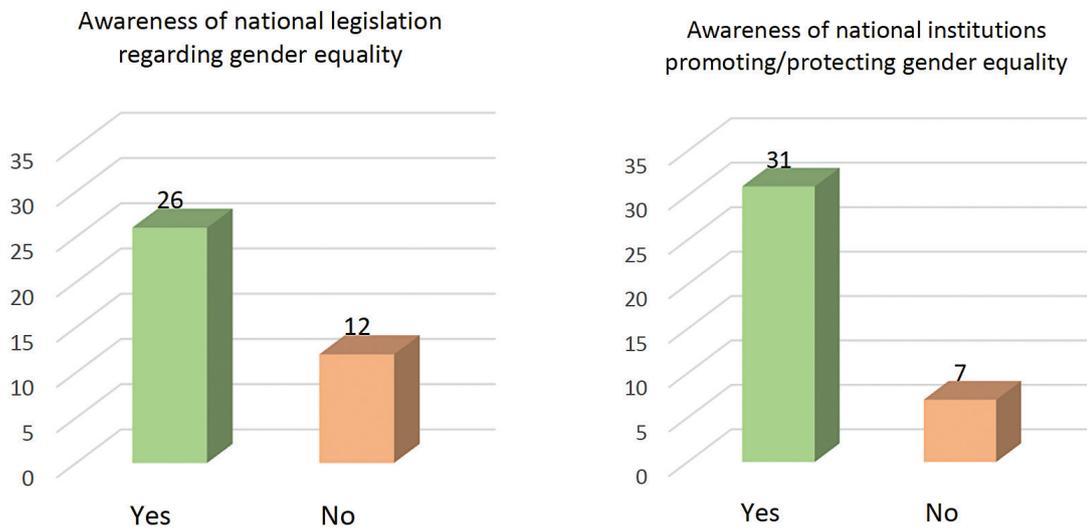


Figure 14 Awareness – national level

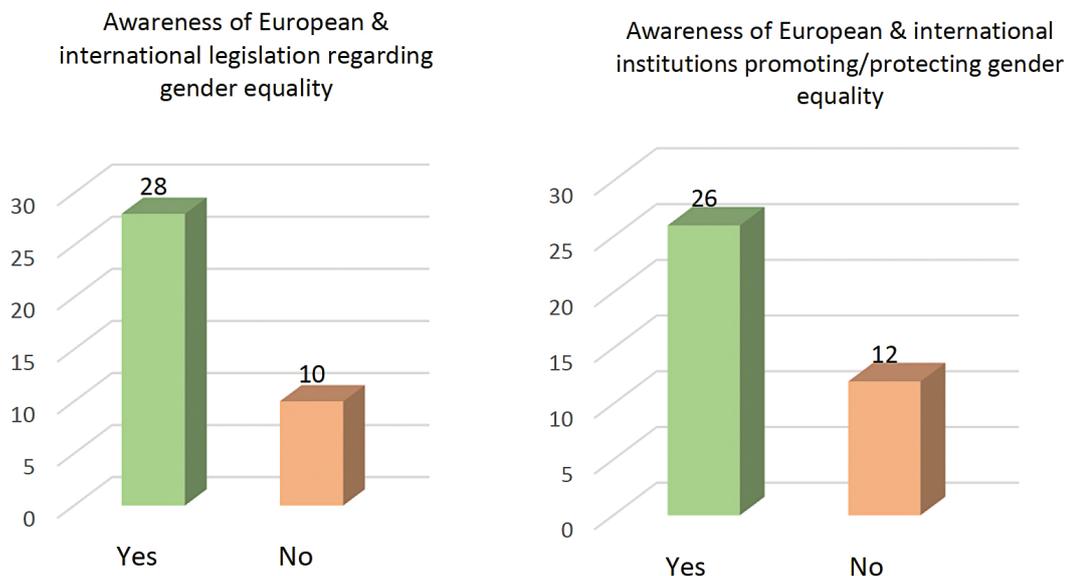


Figure 15 Awareness – European/international level

The survey aims to screen whether minority organisations have adopted a structural approach to embedding gender equality at an institutional level. The findings revealed that only one-third of the respondents have functioning gender equality rules and procedures, and less than a quarter can refer to a written document (Figure 16). Unsurprisingly, with existing background documents to outline the institutional policies, the organisations have structured plans to implement other respective activities and bodies to monitor and control the processes (Figure 17).

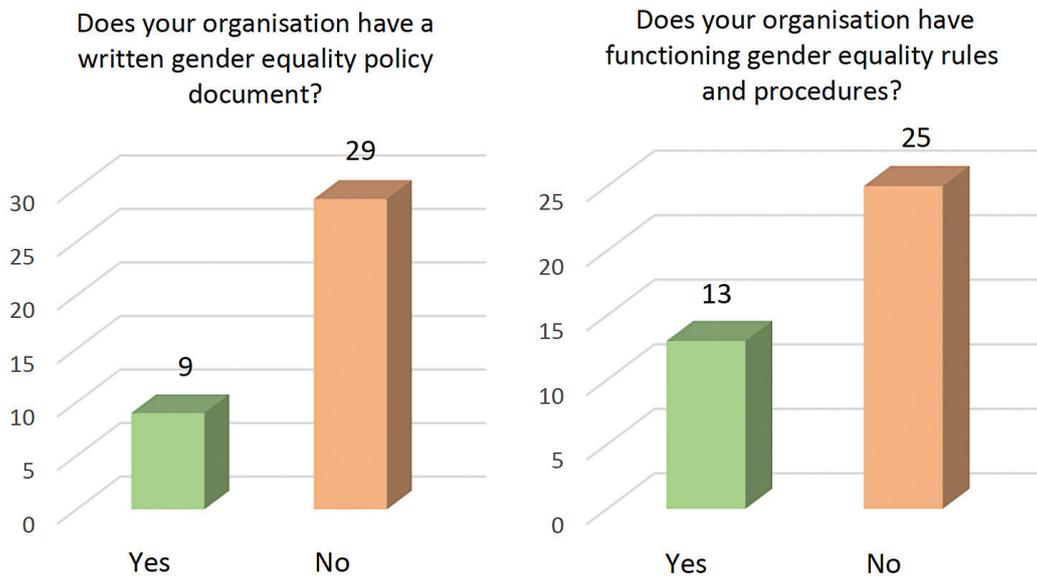


Figure 16 Institutional arrangements – policies and procedures



Figure 17 Institutional arrangements – monitoring structures and plans for implementation

The survey revealed that 22 out of 38 organisations have never provided their staff with training on gender equality issues (Figure 18). This fact can be accounted for by the identified need for a more structured approach at an institutional level to ensure that women are provided with equal opportunities for involvement, participation, and professional development. Although this is concerning per se, the fact that minority organisations implement projects aiming at fostering gender equality and addressing women-related issues without their staff being aware of and equipped with updated background knowledge (Figure 19, Figure 20) calls for attention.

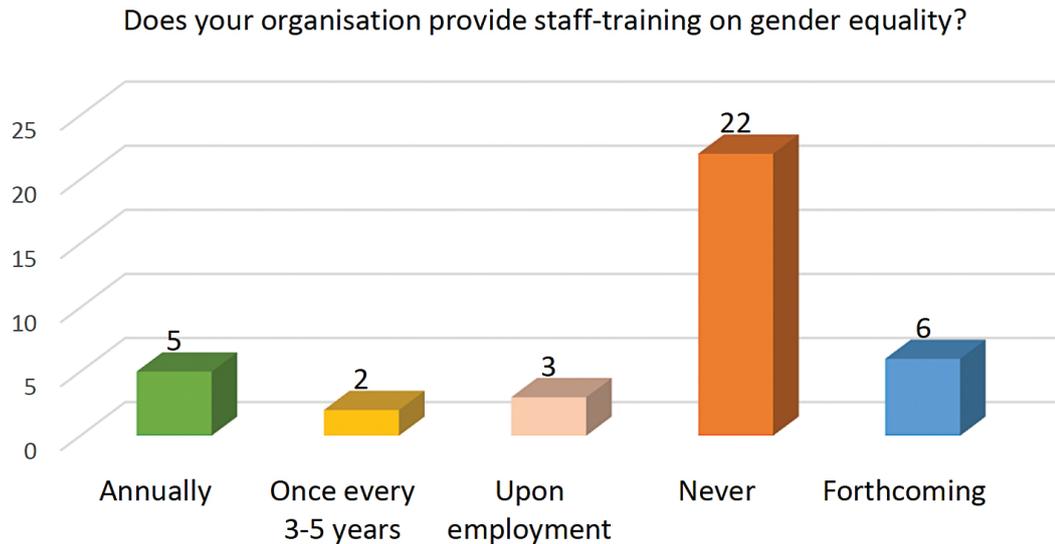
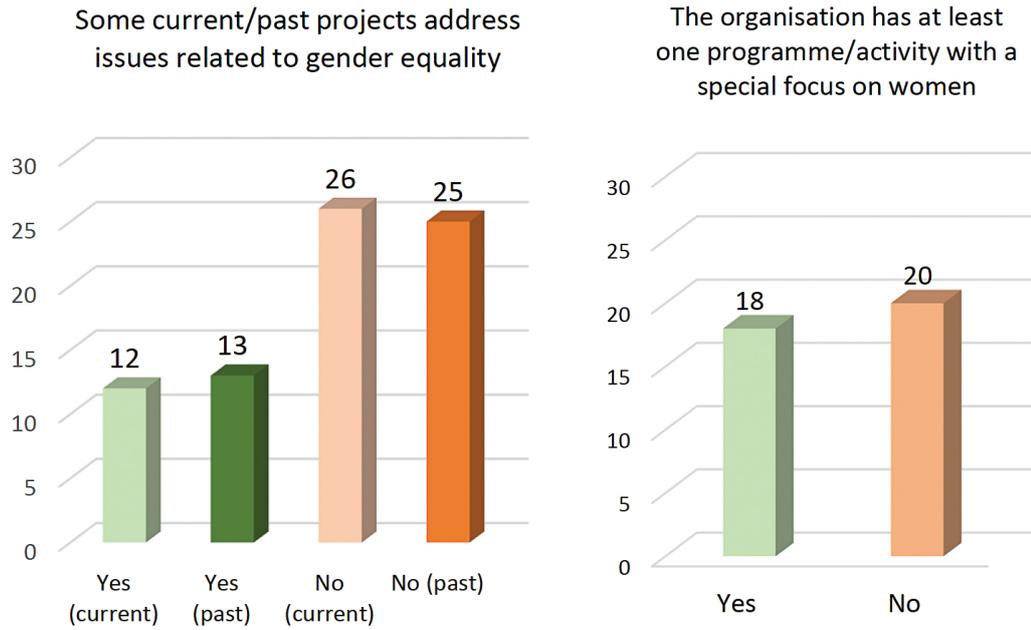


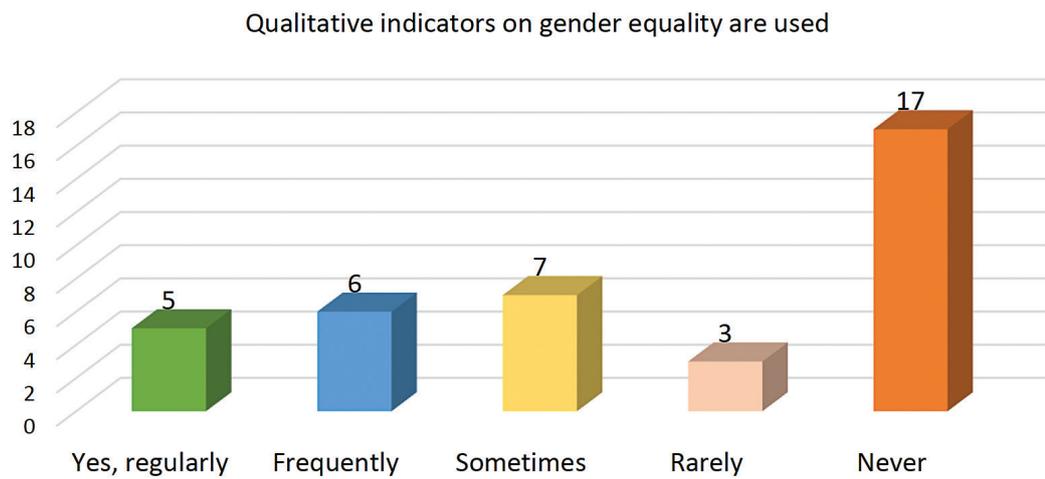
Figure 18 Institutional capacities - staff

## GENDER EQUALITY IN PROGRAMMING & ACTIVITIES

The purpose of the questions under Survey Section 4 was to establish to what extent the minority organisations are engaged in the promotion of gender equality and the fostering of women empowerment. According to the findings, for half of the respondents, gender equality is a programme priority, and women are among the target groups of the project activities (regularly/frequently – for 14 organisations, and sometimes – for another ten organisations). 14 out of 38 respondents have rarely or never had a project targeting women. Figure 20 illustrates that only one-third of the organisations have implemented and are currently implementing projects with a gender perspective. Still, about half of the NGOs have some activities focused on women.



**Figure 19 Gender equality in programming**



**Figure 20 Activities with a focus on gender equality**

Another survey finding is that more than half of the participating organisations either never (17) or rarely (4) collect information to monitor and account for the involvement of women in their project activities (Figure 21)

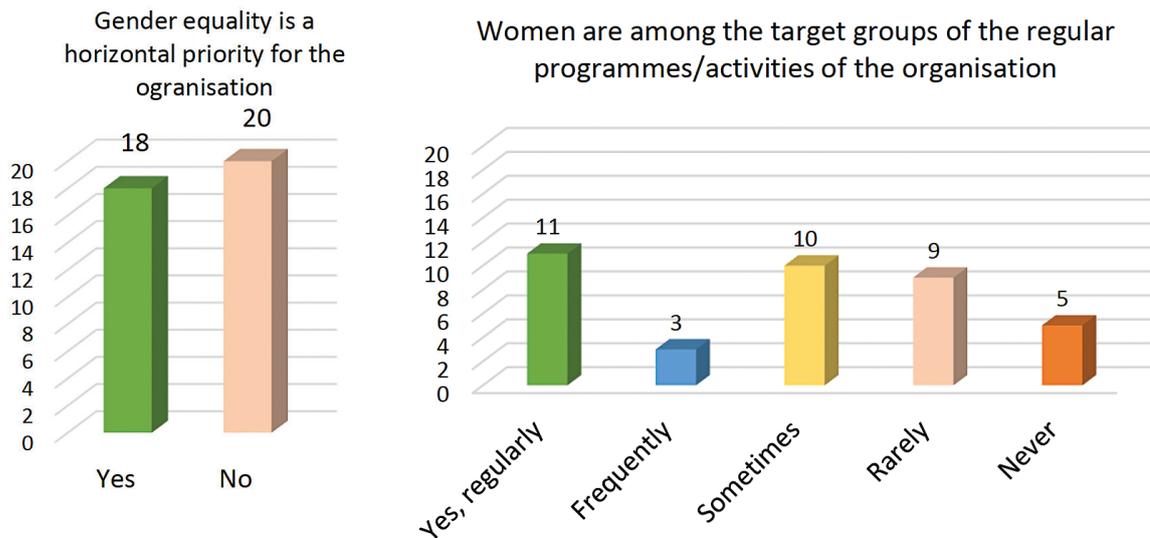


Figure 21 Data collection on women's involvement in project activities

Considering that only seven organisations have reported regularly or frequently collecting disaggregated data about the participants in their activities, the number of respondents (11) stating that the use of qualitative indicators on gender equality is an institutional practice is surprisingly high (Figure 22). The 17 organisations that have never used qualitative indicators are the same that do not account for the characteristics of the members belonging to the target groups they work with.

Does your organisation collect disaggregated data on sex, gender and age of participants in project activities/events?

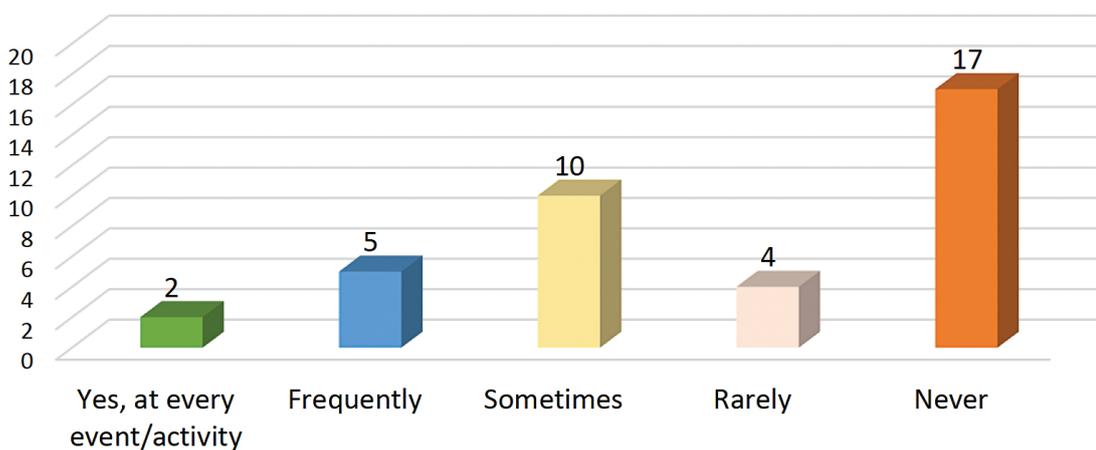


Figure 22 Use of qualitative indicators on gender equality

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The last section of the survey aimed at gathering information about the challenges that impede women's empowerment and gender equality in general, to collect ideas about possible solutions, as viewed by the stakeholders, as well as to identify the training and capacity-building needs of the minority organisations.

In light of the findings about the lack of developed institutional instruments and tools for ensuring a structured approach to the implementation of gender equality principles, the fact that more than 75% of the respondents stated an interest in improving their policies and practices (Figure 23) when the majority declared existing gender balance in their set-up (Figure 24), is considered positive. However, more than one-third of the organisations participating in the survey has assessed an existing need for balance between the number of men and women in their structures. As underlying reasons, the respondents have indicated the traditional role of women, which impedes their active involvement in the NGO sector. Interestingly, the problem with balancing job, family, and career has been identified as external (patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes) and internal (women's decision) impediments to engagement with civic and/or political activities.

It is important for the organisation to improve its gender equality policies and practices

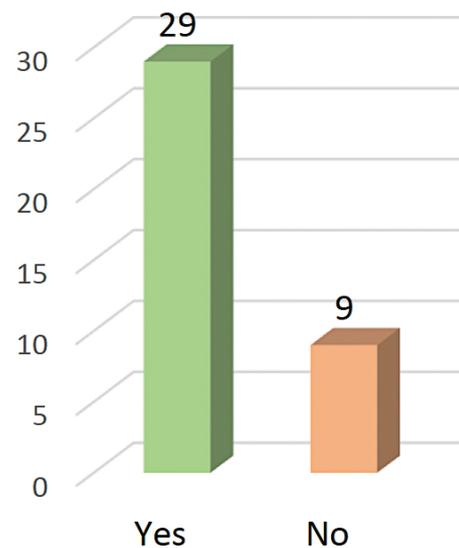


Figure 23 Improvement importance

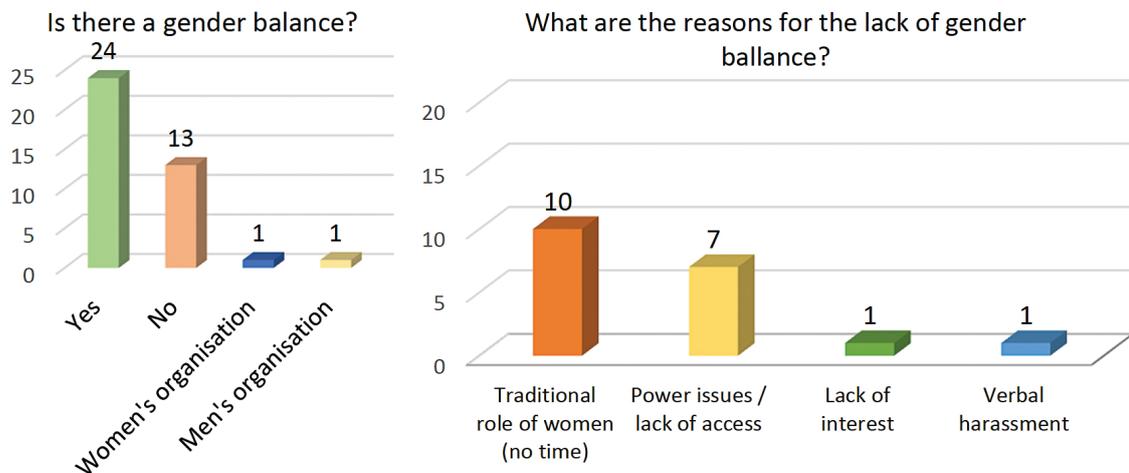


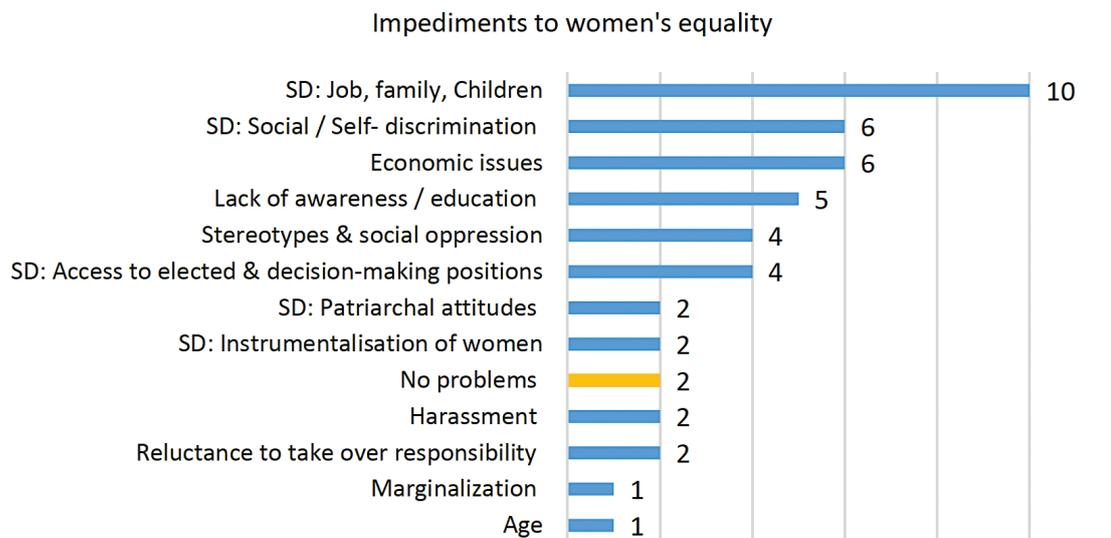
Figure 24 Gender balance & impediments to it

The lack of access to positions in the lead and the power issues within the organisations also appear to be among the challenges to women's participation. Unfortunately, verbal harassment is also present among the identified factors.



**Figure 25 Training needs**

Most of the respondents believe that to foster gender equality and to advance the implementation of its principles, awareness raising across the members of the minority organisations is needed. At the same time, institutional management and employee training also appear to be a need identified by the participants (Figure 25).



**Figure 26 Identified challenges by the minority organisations**

\*SD – Structural Discrimination

As Figure 26 reveals, the significant impediments to equality and civic activism, according to the participating minority organisations, appear to be the problems that women face with balancing between job, family and children and being able to dedicate time to voluntary activities. Nevertheless, it is concerning that challenges such as social and self-discrimination, stereotypes and social oppression appear, as well as existing patriarchal attitudes also being the most common factors. Although the findings can be assigned to situations experienced by women of minorities (based on the fact that participants in the survey were minority organisations), it would be interesting to compare the data with findings from research conducted at the level of mainstream societies. The initial assumption is that the lack of awareness and education and the impeded

access to elective positions would appear among women’s challenges to empowerment regardless of whether they belong to minority or majority communities.

To verify the findings regarding the challenges that prevent women of minorities from participating actively in the life of their communities, FUEN launched a parallel 1-minute survey focused on this issue only. In the survey, which was opened to women and men from all communities, 21 people from 12 European states took part – 17 women and four men, 18 belonging to a minority community and 3 to mainstream societies (Figure 27).

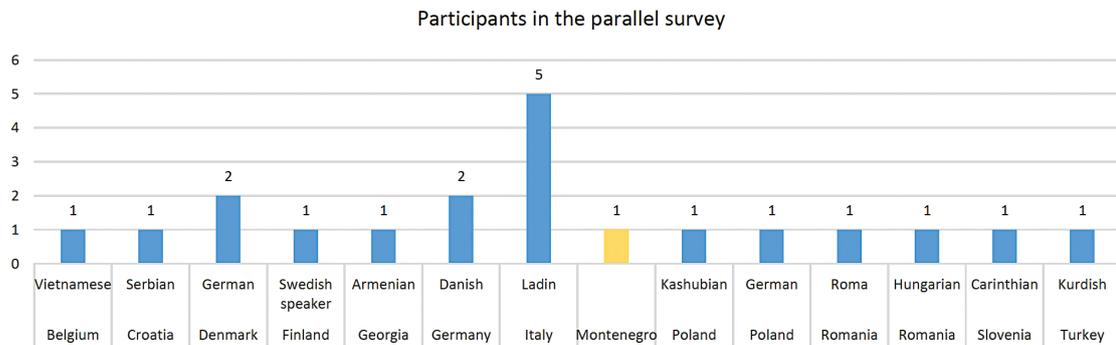


Figure 27 Counties/Minorities represented in the parallel survey.

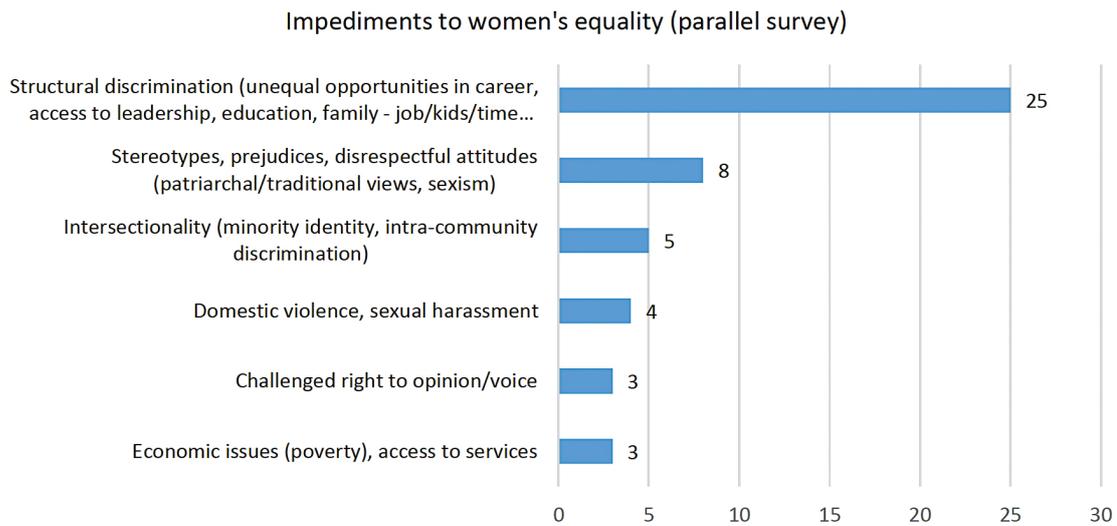


Figure 28 Identified challenges by the stakeholders (general audience)

According to the participants in the parallel survey, the most significant challenge women face is structural discrimination in various fields of life – in professional life and working relations, in access to decision-making positions and leadership, in education, and also in the family (Figure 28). And although these are equality impediments that women of majority communities are also confronting, the women of minorities additionally are exposed to stereotypes and prejudices, as well as to intersectionality. Regardless of the different formulations of problems, which can also be accounted for by the fact that the respondents in the first survey have adopted the position of institutional representatives, the similarities between the two sets of answers are visible.

Having identified the challenges, the minority organisations have also been asked to point out measures that they consider relevant for addressing the problems. Figure 29 visualises

that the majority of the respondents believe that raising awareness, training and provision of information, as well as the building of capacities of women (and especially of women in rural areas), can bring positive changes. It is worth considering and perhaps opening a discussion about suggested mechanisms as the structured approach to gender equality at an organisational level, facilitated access to decision-making positions (through quotes), the fostering of women networks, and the provision of targeted funding.

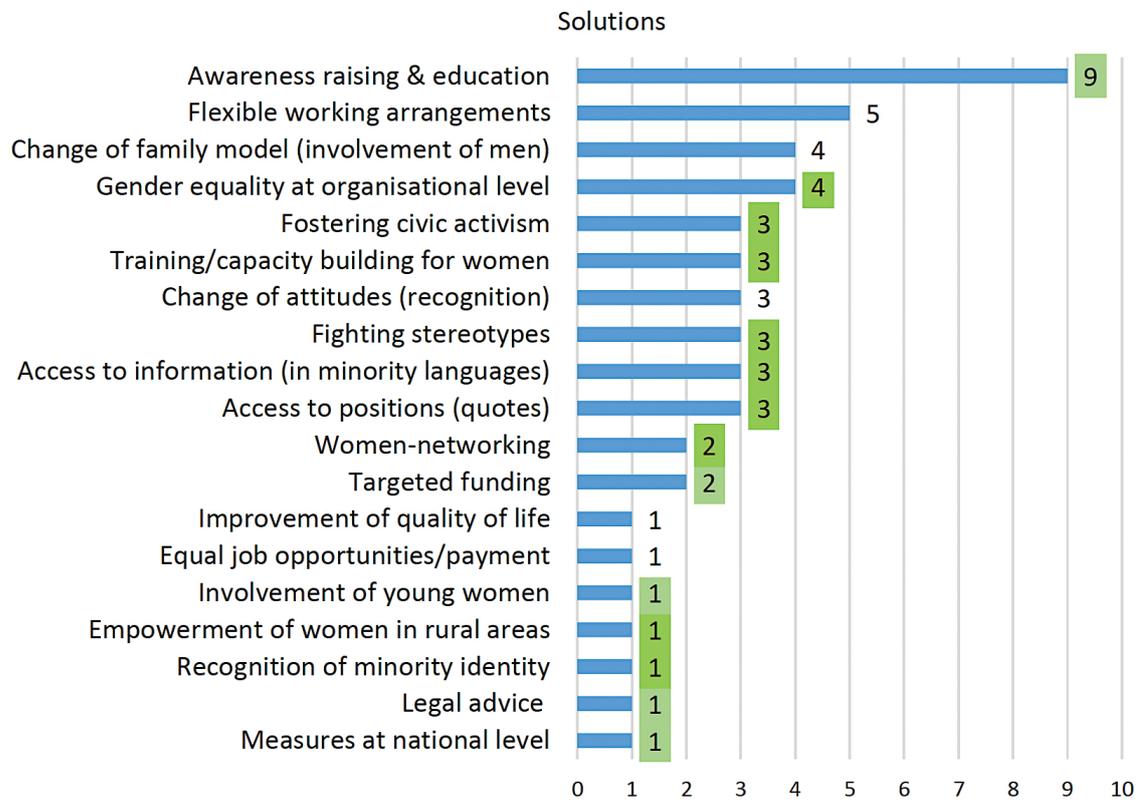


Figure 29 Possible solutions to the identified challenges

## WHAT NEXT?

Summarising the survey findings, the FUEN Women of Minorities Screening Tool has established that:

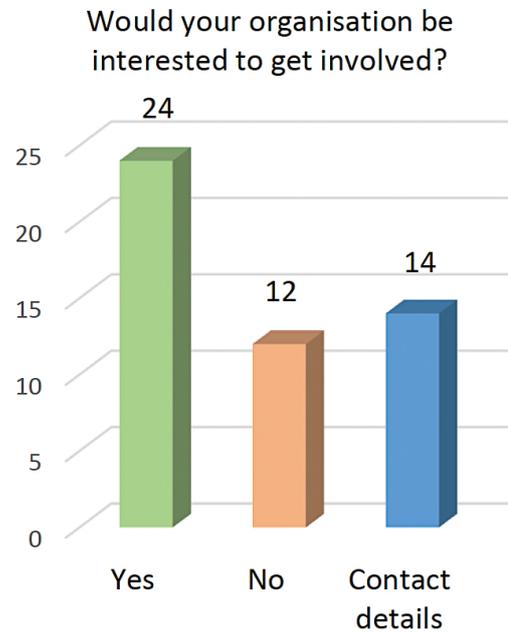
- › The gender equality topic and women's empowerment are not only of interest to the FUEN member organisations but also to a range of actors promoting and protecting minority rights. The situation that women of minorities face appears to concern both women and men belonging to a minority but also majority communities.
- › Women of minorities are active at the institutional level, but their contribution often remains invisible since they rarely are put forward as representatives of their institutions. The impediments appear to come from the existing attitudes and stereotypes instead of structural challenges.

- › While the majority of the staff members of the organisations appear to be women, men dominate the decision-making positions and leadership. Some organisations have never had a woman in leading positions.
- › Most of the minority organisations report an existing gender balance and non-discrimination. Still, very few of them have adopted rules and procedures to safeguard and promote equality at the institutional level.
- › The awareness of national legislation and instruments for the protection and promotion of gender equality is greater than the awareness of the overarching legal frameworks and mechanisms at the European and international levels. A significant percentage of the respondents, however, lack knowledge of national or international normative rules and procedures.
- › Minority institutions almost never conduct staff training on gender equality.
- › Women appear to be among the target groups of the programme activities of the minority organisations. Still, only half of the institutions have adopted gender equality as a horizontal principle of their activities. Only one-third of the organisations have implemented and are currently implementing activities focusing on women.
- › Only very few organisations monitor women's involvement in project activities and use qualitative indicators for data collection. The majority of the organisations do not account for whether women participate and whether their participation is active – whether they speak, present, and become actively involved in the initiatives or are just passive recipients.
- › Achieving its purpose as an awareness-raising tool, the (self-)screening FUEN survey resulted in 29 out of 38 organisations stating that improving their gender equality policies and practices is essential for the institutions. Awareness raising across members, training of management and staff, and obtaining expert support have been identified as relevant capacity-building mechanisms.
- › Structural discrimination in various fields of life appears to be a significant impediment to women's equality in general. Still, minority women are furthermore facing intersectionality and are more exposed to the stereotypes and prejudices that the women of mainstream communities.
- › Although awareness raising, training, and capacity building (of women of minorities but also at the level of societies at large) have been identified as possible mechanisms that can bring in a positive change, the structural approach to women's empowerment, such as quotas ensuring access to decision-making positions, institutional rules and procedures, and mobilisation of support through women-networks could also foster the gender equality, according to the participants in the survey.

Analysing the survey findings and considering the different suggestions about possible solutions to the identified problems, FUEN has identified several activities that the Union can implement, offering support to its members and other interested parties. Although it is beyond the organisation's capacity to impact the working arrangements to become more flexible or to change the existing family models, several measures can become embedded in project activities or focus on new FUEN initiatives. The areas where FUEN can support the stakeholders are highlighted in green in Figure 29.

FUEN considers it positive that most survey respondents (67%) confirmed that they are interested in being involved in future initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment (Figure 30). The fact that more than 50% of these organisations have also decided to voluntarily provide their contact details at the end of the anonymous survey (so that they can be contacted directly) is viewed as a statement of support to the FUEN "Women of Minorities" project, launched with the small-scale research, and a recognition that the member organisations are interested in working to foster the gender equality.

Acknowledging that the issues that the survey has raised need attention, the first step forward in 2023 will be that FUEN together with the interested member organisations will conduct an online planning meeting. An invitation will also be extended to all members and other stakeholders, who might be willing to support the initiatives aiming at the empowerment of the women of minorities.



**Figure 30** Number of organisations interested in continuing working on the topic





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