



Co-funded by the European Union



Sweden  
Sverige

Co-funded by Sweden

# HOW MUCH DO WOMEN PARTICIPATE IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS?

*Gender Analysis of the Coordination Mechanism*

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**2023**





Co-funded by the European Union



Sweden  
Sverige

Co-funded by Sweden

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and co-funded by Sweden. Its contents are the sole responsibility of PRAVA ZA SVE and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or Sweden.

Implemented by:

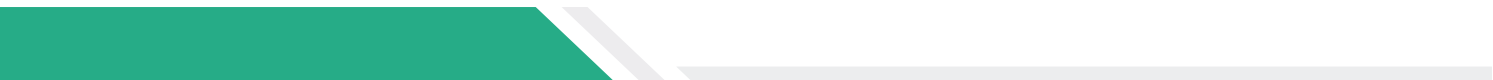




---

**How much do women participate in the European integration process?  
Gender Analysis of the Coordination Mechanism?**

---



Title: How much do women participate in the European integration process?  
Gender Analysis of the Coordination Mechanism?

For the publisher: PRAVA ZA SVE (Rights for All)

Authors: Diana Šehić, Maida Omerćehajić and Arijana Ćatović

Translation: Lejla Efendić

DTP: Adijata Bilanović



INTRODUCTION..... 1

    Steps towards the EU..... 1

    Civil society and the EU integration process..... 3

    Why Gender analysis of the Coordination Mechanism?..... 3

METHODOLOGY..... 4

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION COORDINATION MECHANISM..... 5

    Political bodies..... 6

    Technical and operational bodies..... 8

JOINT BODIES OF BIH AND THE EUROPEAN UNION..... 12

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY ON THE BIH ACCESSION PROCESS FROM THE  
CANDIDATE STATUS TO THE EU MEMBERSHIP..... 13

CONCLUSION..... 14

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 15

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
RS	Republika Srpska
Bd	Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
EUD	European Union Delegation
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
GEL	Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina



The regional action “Furthering Gender Equality Through the EU Accession Process”, co-funded by the European Union (EU) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), implemented by Reactor - Research in Action (North Macedonia) with its partner organizations the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (Office in North Macedonia), Kosovo Women’s Network (Kosovo), Albanian Women’s Empowerment Network - AWEN (Albania), Rights for All (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Women’s Rights Center (Montenegro), aims to enhance and broaden existing regional cooperation, strengthen participatory democracies and to bring about an inclusive and gender-sensitive EU approximation process. Among other things, the action contributes to strengthening WCSOs’ capacities to engage with governments, EU Delegations and Offices in the country and the region, making all involved actors aware of the importance of gender dimensions of the EU Accession process. In particular, it aims to improve the accountability of governments and the EU Delegation (EUD) in implementing commitments to gender equality and women’s rights during the EU Accession process.

Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks gender analyses in various thematic areas and sectors related to the EU Accession process, including the IPA III funding. Therefore, this analysis aims to contribute to this process and point out the existing gap in gender equality in the country, and call for the full application of the Law on Gender Equality of BiH (GEL). The analysis will be published in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in the countries of the region where this action is implemented.

### **Steps toward the EU**

BiH signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) back in 2008,<sup>1</sup> which entered into force in 2015. The very next year, in 2016, BiH submitted an application for membership in the European Union (EU), and in *May 2019, the European Commission (EC) adopted the Opinion on BiH’s EU membership application*<sup>2</sup> defining 14 key priorities that the country must fulfill to open accession negotiations, even though BiH did not have candidate status at that time.

EU officials emphasized that candidate status requires BiH to make substantial progress in fulfilling the stated priorities from the EC Opinion. Priorities include the areas of democracy/functionality, rule of law, fundamental rights, and public administration reform, among others. The Commission is ready to continue supporting BiH’s efforts on its European path by further engaging in political dialogue and establishing a high-level political forum to monitor the implementation of the aforementioned steps and reporting on further progress on the ground.

In its 2022 Report on BiH, the European Commission (EC) recommended to the Council to grant BiH the status of a candidate country, on the understanding that BiH is taking steps to fulfill 8 special conditions in connection with the candidate status<sup>3</sup>. Although very little has been done to fulfill the required conditions for candidate status, as many observed, in December 2022 BiH received the status of a candidate country, mostly due to the current geopolitical situation in the world.

1 The Stabilization and Association Agreement: [https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/sporazum-o-stabilizaciji-i-bridruzivanju\\_1604320186.pdf](https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/sporazum-o-stabilizaciji-i-bridruzivanju_1604320186.pdf)

2 The EC Opinion on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s EU Membership Application: <https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Misljenje-Komisije-o-zahjjevu-Bosne-i-Hercegovina-za-%C4%8Dlanstvo-u-Evropskoj-uniji.pdf>

3 The EC Report on BiH: [https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu\\_1666693844.pdf](https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu_1666693844.pdf)  
The conditions are as follows: As a matter of priority, BiH should adopt amendments to the current Law on High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council related to integrity; adopt the new Law on the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and the new Law on Courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina; adopt the Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest; take strong steps to strengthen the prevention and fight against corruption and organized crime; resolutely ensure effective coordination of border management and migration management capacity at all levels and ensure the functioning of the asylum system; ensure the prohibition of torture, especially through the establishment of a national preventive mechanism against torture and ill-treatment; ensure freedom of expression and of the media and the protection of journalists, especially by ensuring appropriate judicial follow-up in cases of threats and violence against journalists and media workers; ensure a track record in the functioning at all levels of the coordination mechanism on EU matters including by developing and adopting a national program for the adoption of the EU acquis.

The latest EC Report for BiH (2022) is relatively negative and states that no progress has been made in key areas. When it comes to civil society, it is emphasized that the state should ensure an enabling environment for civil society, as well as meaningful and systematic consultations with civil society as part of an inclusive policy dialogue, which is also one of the 14 key priorities<sup>4</sup>.

BiH has a long way to go to implement many reforms, among which is the harmonization of legislation with the EU *acquis*<sup>5</sup>. To achieve this, BiH needs to adopt the National Program for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), a key strategic document, as required under the SAA. The successful harmonization of legislation and the implementation of harmonized regulations are the most important conditions for further progress toward EU membership. It is important to stress that the European gender equality standards as well as the domestic anti-discrimination legislation, and especially the GEL, as a key law safeguarding gender equality, require that in this process the gender equality principle be integrated into all legislative and public policy reforms in the coming period.

This is the most complex and extremely time-consuming process, and it implies the mandatory participation of a large number of institutions and experts of various profiles who are expected to know domestic legislation, EU legislation, as well as legal regulation drafting techniques.

It is one of the most demanding processes for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the extremely complex constitutional structure, the division of responsibilities, and the decision-making process, which is very slow and, as a rule, very politically colored. Administrative capacities are weak and there is a lack of efficient governance coordination structures and coordinated action of all 14 governments in the country.<sup>6</sup>

Hence, the successful European integration process requires the establishment of a specific and common model for carrying out the necessary activities and decision-making. To this end, a coordination system for the European integration process in BiH (Coordination Mechanism) was established.<sup>7</sup> Put simply, the Coordination Mechanism is a system that establishes and governs the way of working, mutual coordination, and decision-making of various institutions in BiH and ensures the successful implementation of a large number of different activities in the European integration process, while respecting a large number of different levels of government and divided responsibilities in BiH.

The bodies of the Coordination Mechanism have a total of 2020 members, elected officials, and civil servants from 14 governments at all levels. It consists of 36 working groups that cover all chapters of the *acquis*, as well as political and economic criteria, and public administration reform. The Directorate for European Integration, which operates within the Council of Ministers of BiH, acts as the secretariat of the Commission for European Integration and the European Integration Collegium.<sup>8</sup>

4 Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022 Report.

[https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu\\_1666693844.pdf](https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu_1666693844.pdf)

5 Acquis or *acquis communautaire* before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty) is the collection of common rights and obligations that constitute the body of EU law, and is incorporated into the legal systems of EU Member States. The *acquis* is constantly evolving and includes the content, principles and political goals of treaties; legislation adopted in the application of treaties and case law of the Court of the European Union; declarations and resolutions adopted by the EU; measures related to common foreign and security policy; measures related to justice and internal affairs; international agreements concluded by the EU and agreements concluded between EU Member States in the field of EU activities. States wishing to become EU members are obliged to transpose the *acquis* before accession and be able to implement it. Deviations from the *acquis* may be approved only in extraordinary circumstances. The conditions and manner of accepting and implementing the *acquis* are part of the EU membership negotiations, and are determined by the EU accession agreement. EU legal acts are divided into 20 chapters in the EUR-Lex database, and for the purposes of membership negotiations, they are divided into 35 chapters. (See: EUR-Lex and Negotiation Chapters). Source: DEI: [https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/1pojmovnik-evropskih-integracija\\_1602233179.pdf](https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/1pojmovnik-evropskih-integracija_1602233179.pdf)

6 BiH has a very complex internal structure and organization of government with 14 constitutions (Constitution of BiH, Constitutions of two entities/Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska and the Statute of Brčko District, plus 10 cantonal constitutions in the Federation of BiH). Accordingly, there is one government at each of the 14 levels. This alone is quite enough to assume the complexity in the establishment, and especially the functioning of government at all levels. [https://www.ustavnisud.ba/public/down/USTAV\\_BOSNE\\_I\\_HERCEGOVINE\\_bos.pdf](https://www.ustavnisud.ba/public/down/USTAV_BOSNE_I_HERCEGOVINE_bos.pdf)

7 Decision on the coordination system of European integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, <http://sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/OhWGVQzgUZM=>

8 Directorate for European Integration <https://www.dei.gov.ba/>

## ***Civil Society and the EU integration process***

Democracy, full protection of individual human rights and freedoms, and the rule of law are the most significant civilizational achievements of the EU that the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina expect from the integration process. An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and institutions of BiH should recognize and treat it as such. EU policy on civil society is based on the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region<sup>9</sup>.

The role and contribution of civil society, especially women's human rights and gender equality organizations, in the European integration process are particularly important, and this sector has enormous expertise. Civil society represents the interests of citizens in the broadest sense, especially marginalized people, and generally advocates for the full protection of human rights and gender equality in all areas of society and life. The importance of cooperation with civil society was particularly highlighted in Article 11 of the Treaty on the European Union<sup>10</sup>, which speaks of the importance of civil dialogue. Referring to this Treaty, the EU calls on the Western Balkans countries to encourage this dialogue and invite civil society to play its role in this process and thus increase the level of democratic representation of society. In the context of this requirement, civil society becomes an important partner in the process of European integration for both domestic and EU institutions.

Effective communication about how the enlargement process works and what impact it has on citizens' lives remains essential to ensuring public support. This requires the joint efforts of the EU and its Member States, but also of governments and civil society in the countries involved in the enlargement process, including BiH.

### ***Why Gender Analysis of the Coordination Mechanism?***

The coordination mechanism is a specific and specially designed administrative and operational system for communication and cooperation between different levels of government in BiH in the process of European integration. The EC reports on BiH repeatedly described it as necessary, especially for enabling efficient interaction between BiH and the EU.

Above else, this analysis provides an overview of all Coordination Mechanism bodies, their importance and role in the process of European integration, the way of working, and mutual coordination in the decision-making process. More importantly, the analysis shows the representation (in percentages) of women and men in all Coordination Mechanism bodies, the actual distribution of power in politics and state institutions, and provides an insight into the level of women's participation in the European integration process. In this way, we attempted to make a contribution to a better understanding of the legal obligations of equal gender representation in the European integration decision-making process, as well as of the need and significance of the inclusion of women in decision-making positions. Finally, the analysis points to possible areas within the Coordination Mechanism for civil society action, which is particularly important for all those who want to contribute to the process of European integration, especially for women's civil society organizations, and all other CSOs advocating for the protection of gender equality.

9 Civil society: [http://europa.ba/?page\\_id=679](http://europa.ba/?page_id=679)

10 Lisbon Treaty <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/hr/sheet/5/ugovor-iz-lisabona>

The methodology used in the gender analysis of the Coordination Mechanism included desk research i.e., analyzing the content, and collecting and analyzing statistical data. Content analysis was used to explain what the Coordination Mechanism actually is and what its bodies and functions are. Statistical data were collected and analyzed to learn about the participation of women in various bodies and functions of the Coordination Mechanism.

To present the chronology of this comprehensive system and its bodies, all relevant documents were analyzed: from the Roadmap for BiH's application for EU membership to the Decision on the Coordination System for the European integration process in BiH, under which the Coordination Mechanism was established.

The statistical data were collected to analyze the participation of women in each body of the Coordination Mechanism. During the collection of statistical data, the content was once again analyzed, as well as the documents based on which all the Coordination Mechanism bodies were formed in order to learn of various political or other functions of each body, and the percentage of women and men in these functions. In addition, analyzed were the lists of all 36 working groups made up of reps of competent institutions from all levels of government.

Once all the available data on the number of women and men in individual Coordination Mechanism bodies were collected, they were compared against the gender structure data of earlier analyses of the Coordination Mechanism bodies.<sup>11</sup>

In this process, the Directorate for European Integration provided immeasurable support, without which it would have been very difficult to develop this gender analysis.<sup>12</sup>

It should be noted that the composition within various bodies changes even within the single election cycle due to political instability and change of governments, mostly at the cantonal level.<sup>13</sup>

The limitations of the analysis were reflected in the following:

- Delays in the formation of government at the level of individual cantons in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the General Elections in BiH, some cantonal governments have not yet been fully formed.<sup>14</sup>
- The untimely updating of the official websites of the cantonal governments, and the general difficulty in collecting all the necessary data from the governments at cantonal levels.

---

11 The first gender analysis of all Coordination Mechanism bodies was carried out in 2017 by the Association "Prava za sve" [Rights for All] <https://pravazasve.ba/bs/project/gdje-su-zene-u-mehanizmu-koordinacije-za-eu-integracije-4/>. The second gender analysis of all Coordination Mechanism bodies was prepared by the Directorate for European Integration in 2019, and was shared with the Association "Rights for All" upon request. The analysis made for the purposes of this publication covers the years 2022 and 2023, and includes data provided by the Directorate for European Integration and data collected from official government websites.

12 The Directorate for European Integration is a permanent, autonomous and professional body of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which coordinates the processes and activities of the institutions in the integration of BiH into the European Union.

13 For this reason, the analysis also looked into the following election cycles: 2014 -2018; 2018-2022 i 2022 -2026

14 At the time of writing this gender analysis, the Governments of Canton 10 and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton had not yet been formed.

In June 2012, the first meeting of the high-level Dialogue on the Accession Process with BiH was held, on which occasion the Roadmap for BiH's EU membership application was submitted. In conclusion, it was highlighted that executive authorities at all levels should engage in a dialogue in order to agree on an effective coordination mechanism for engagement with the EU which will enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the relevant European Integration processes and come to an agreed position on EU issues so as to speak with "one voice" on behalf of the entire country in the EU accession process.<sup>15</sup>

Both the efficient mechanism of coordination between different levels of government aimed at harmonizing, implementing, and enforcing the laws of the European Union and the EC progress reports on BiH have been mentioned several times as a prerequisite for an efficient engagement between BiH and the EU because the absence a common position on key reforms is hindering the key reform processes.<sup>16</sup>

Although the original deadline for defining an efficient coordination mechanism was the end of October 2012, the first proposals for a concrete way of its functioning appeared only in the middle of 2016. The coordination mechanism has finally been established **by the Decision on the coordination system for the European integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina**<sup>17</sup> which the BiH Council of Ministers adopted in 2016.<sup>18</sup>

Coordination of the European integration process implies activities aimed at ensuring the highest level of approximation and coherence of institutions at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina to fulfill contractual obligations under the SAA as well as any other obligations stemming from the European integration process. The coordination system also governs the manner of communication among the institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a view to ensuring a common standpoint of Bosnia and Herzegovina in communication with the European Union institutions.<sup>19</sup>

Coordination of the European integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina is based on the principles of compliance with the existing internal legal and political structure in BiH and safeguarding of competences of all levels of government and their institutions, as laid down in the constitution, in specific areas covered by the process of European integration, ensuring visibility and accountability of all levels of government for timely and effective fulfillment of commitments in the European integration process within their competence.<sup>20</sup>

Coordination is implemented on a **horizontal level** (coordination within one level of government organization) and a **vertical level** (coordination between different levels of government organization). Each level of government independently regulates the structures and modalities of achieving horizontal coordination, as per its constitutional order and administrative and legal specificities, capacities, and needs.

As part of the Coordination Mechanism, and with the aim of achieving effective **vertical coordination** between different levels of government organization, **four common bodies** were established and they decide on matters by consensus. Some of these bodies are political because decisions are made at the highest political level, and some are technical and operational, working on general, technical, operational, and

15 Joint Conclusions from the High-Level Dialogue on the Accession Process with Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Road Map for BiH's EU membership application: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_12\\_503](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_12_503)

16 Bosnia and Herzegovina progress report [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-12/ba\\_rapport\\_2013.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-12/ba_rapport_2013.pdf)

17 Official Gazette of BiH No. 72/16 and Official Gazette of BiH No. 35/18

18 The Decision also had one minor amendment, the Decision amending the Decision on the Coordination System of the European Integration Process in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 35/18) concerning the appointment of representatives to working groups.

19 <https://www.dei.gov.ba/bs/accession-process>

20 Competences in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a complex state, are divided between the state, entity and cantonal levels, and the level of the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which consequently results in a division of legislative competence between different levels of government. ([https://www.pfsa.unsa.ba/pf/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Politicki\\_sistem\\_Bosne\\_i\\_Hercegovine.pdf](https://www.pfsa.unsa.ba/pf/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Politicki_sistem_Bosne_i_Hercegovine.pdf))

methodological coordination to ensure the highest degree of comprehensiveness in the work of competent institutions.

These bodies are:

- The European Integration Collegium
- Ministerial conferences
- The Commission for European Integration
- Working groups for European Integration

All the aforementioned Coordination Mechanism bodies are made up of reps of the executive power and institutions of all levels of government in BiH and they always change, to some extent, from one election cycle to another, with each new government. Yet, it is important to note that the composition within various bodies changes even within the single election cycle due to political instability and change in governments, mostly at the cantonal level. Of course, all of this greatly affects the gender structure in the composition of these bodies, that is, a different ratio of men and women. For this reason, the analysis also looked into these changes in the composition of the bodies.

Namely, in addition to compliance with the principles of horizontal and vertical coordination of the established bodies with the aim of ensuring efficient functioning of the Coordination Mechanism, it is necessary to comply with the principle of equal gender representation among the members and chairpersons of these bodies, as provided under the Law on Gender Equality. Namely, under this law, bodies of the state at all levels of government organization and local self-governance shall ensure and promote balanced representation of both sexes in the process of governance and decision-making. This obligation applies to all authorized bodies that propose representatives and delegations in international organizations and bodies. Equal gender representation is deemed to exist when one of the sexes is represented with at least 40%.<sup>21</sup> In view of these legal provisions, at least 40% of women should be represented in all bodies established within the Coordination Mechanism.

Let's take a look at the representation of women in vertical coordination bodies, which are made up exclusively of executive powers representatives from all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as representatives of various institutions, and civil servants.

### **Political bodies**

**European Integration Collegium** is the highest political body in the coordination system for the European integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The task of the Collegium is to ensure the agreed positions on key strategic and political issues, and ultimately remove any stoppages in fulfilling obligations of BiH arising from the European integration process.

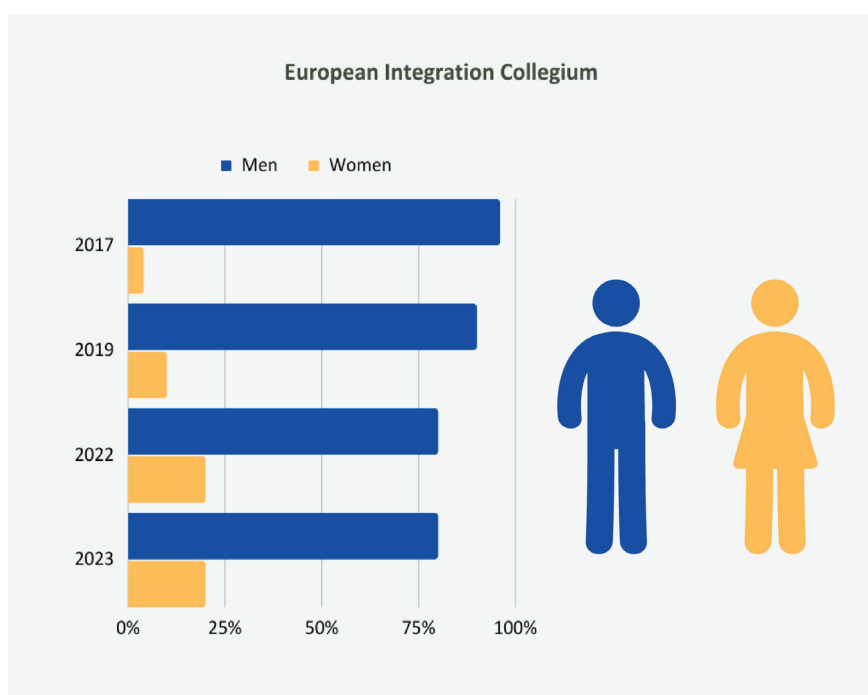
It consists of the chair of the BiH Council of Ministers and his/her deputies, the president and two members of the Government of the Federation of BiH, the president and two members of the Government of the Republic of Srpska, the mayor of Brčko District of BiH, and the presidents of the cantonal governments in the Federation of BiH.

The first analysis of the gender structure in the bodies of the Coordination Mechanism in BiH was made in 2017, and at that time the European Integration Collegium was made up of 96% of men and only 4% of women. The next analysis of the gender structure was done in 2019, and at that time the European Integration Collegium comprised 90% men and 10% women. According to the analysis carried out in the first

21 Law on Gender Equality in BiH, Article 20: <https://arsbih.gov.ba/project/zakon-o-ravnopravnosti-spolova-u-bih/>

half of 2022, the Collegium comprised 80% men and 20% women. And the latest data for 2023<sup>22</sup> show that the situation has not changed, with 20% of women and 80% of men in the composition of the Collegium.

While these data suggest a slight increase in women's participation in the highest political body of the Coordination Mechanism, this growth is still very slow and is still far from the required legal minimum of 40% of the underrepresented sex. Given that it is the most important political body, it does not surprise that it is dominated by men. As a rule, the most important political positions in the legislative and executive bodies are held by men, and the members of these bodies are determined by the political position they hold.



**Ministerial conferences** are also political bodies within the Coordination Mechanism whose operation ensures a comprehensive and uniform approach of competent institutions from all levels of government to certain sectoral areas covered by the European integration process.

Ministerial conferences contribute to overcoming potential delays in fulfilling BiH's obligations in the European integration process, and in the process of EU aid programming, which could not be resolved within the framework of technical and operational bodies in the coordination system. To meet the obligations arising from the SAA, ministerial conferences defined common guidelines and platforms for the work of operational and technical bodies in the system of coordination in individual sectoral areas covered by the EU accession process. The ministerial conferences are established per individual sector-specific areas in line with the chapters of the EU *acquis* and the constitutional competences of individual levels of government. If a ministerial conference is unable to take a position on a specific issue or fails to agree on its position within 10 days from the receipt of the request from technical and operational bodies, the request for the position agreed shall be referred to the European Integration Collegium.<sup>23</sup>

They are made up of relevant line ministers of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Entity governments, cantonal governments, and representatives of the Government of the Brčko District of BiH, in

22 After the last General Elections in BiH held in October 2022

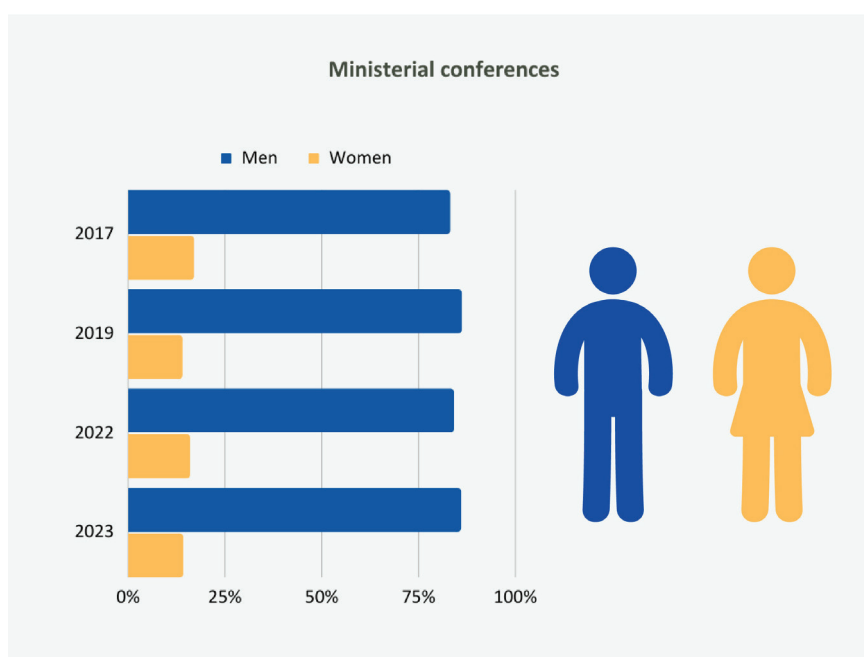
23 Instruction on ministerial conferences in the system of coordination in the process of European integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, <http://sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/OhWGVQzgUZM=>

the area for which the ministerial conference was formed.

According to the data collected in the gender analysis of the Coordination Mechanism in 2017, the bodies of the Ministerial Conferences were made up of 83% of men and 17% of women. Two years later, in 2019, the bodies of the Ministerial Conferences comprised 86% men and 14% women. According to the analysis from the first half of 2022, the Collegium comprised 84% men and 16% women. Finally, the latest data for 2023 show that the representation of men is 85.8%, and women 14.2%.

Looking at the trend of women's representation in the Ministerial Conferences, we see noticeable deviations i.e., a drop in the number of women, which is not surprising, since for years a very small number of female ministers have been appointed at all levels of executive power. Ministerial positions are always a matter of political agreements, and political appointees are, as a rule, dominantly men. So when it comes to this body of the Coordination Mechanism, given that it is a political body whose members are practically determined by the political position they hold, men dominate again.

Thus the appointments in these two most important political bodies of the Coordination Mechanism have violated the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality. The relevant laws on the appointment of governments at all levels are not harmonized with GEL, which requires at least the participation of 40% of the underrepresented sex in the positions of prime ministers and ministers, and in practice, this leads to these positions being significantly dominated by men. This is yet another proof that women do not participate equally in key decision-making positions, including in the European integration process.



### ***Technical and operational bodies***

***Commission for European Integration*** is the body in charge of general, operational, and methodological coordination of the operation of competent institutions at all levels of government in BiH in order to achieve the highest level of comprehensiveness in the European integration process. The Commission for European Integration considers and agrees on the issues that could not be resolved at the level of working groups.

The permanent members of the Commission for European Integration are the director of the Directorate for

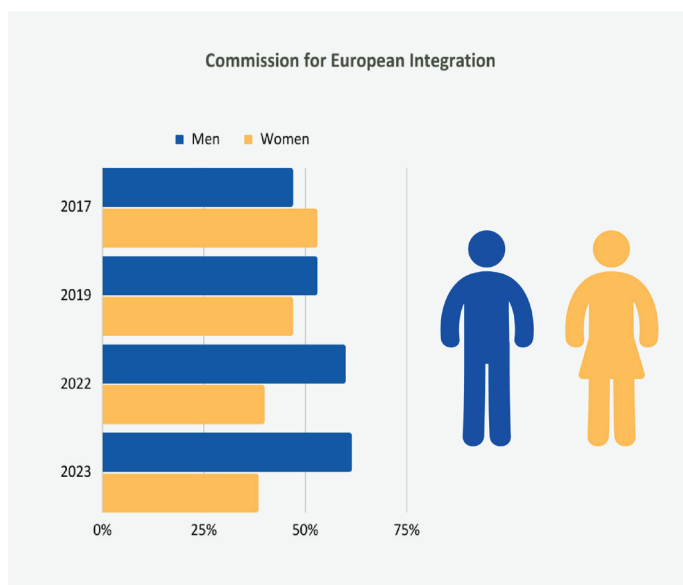


European Integration, one representative from each entity government, one representative from all cantons, and the Government of the Brčko District of BiH who are in charge of coordinating the European integration process, as well as a person appointed on behalf of the Directorate for European Integration in the capacity of secretary of this Commission. The Commission for European Integration also has complementary members who may be engaged in different functions, depending on the matters discussed by the Commission, upon an invitation of the chairperson and a previously reached agreement of all permanent members.

It is important to note that the Commission for European Integration enables the participation of representatives of the non-governmental sector and the academic community in the capacity of complementary members. They may be engaged upon an invitation of the chairperson and a previously reached agreement of all permanent members of the Commission. Ensuring an enabling environment for civil society in BiH is one of the key priorities from the Opinion of the European Commission on BiH's application for EU membership from 2019<sup>24</sup> in which no progress has yet been recorded. The European Commission has been repeatedly stressing in its country reports on BiH that an empowered civil society is a key component of every democratic system and should be recognized and treated as such by public institutions.<sup>25</sup> The lack of progress in ensuring meaningful and systematic consultations with civil society as part of an inclusive dialogue on policies, of which the discussions on reforms in the European integration process are part, is particularly worrying. We are not aware of civil society having been involved in the work of the Commission for European Integration.

According to 2017 data, this body comprised 53% women and 47% men, while in 2019 the ratio was 53% to 47% in favor of men. The data on the composition of the Commission for European Integration from the second half of 2022 showed a downward trend in the number of women in this body, with the ratio of 40% of women and 60% of men, which is in line with the prescribed legal minimum for the representation of less represented sex. The latest data for 2023 (after the last elections) show a further decline in the number of women, hence the Commission for European Integration currently comprises 38,5% women and 61,5% men.

It can be assumed that the reason for the greater involvement of women in the work of the Commission for European Integration is primarily the fact that this is not a political body, but practically a working body that requires coordination of operational and technical activities. Women, as so far proved to be the case, are more represented in the bodies that are more labor-intensive, unlike the decision-making bodies where they are, as a rule, in the minority.



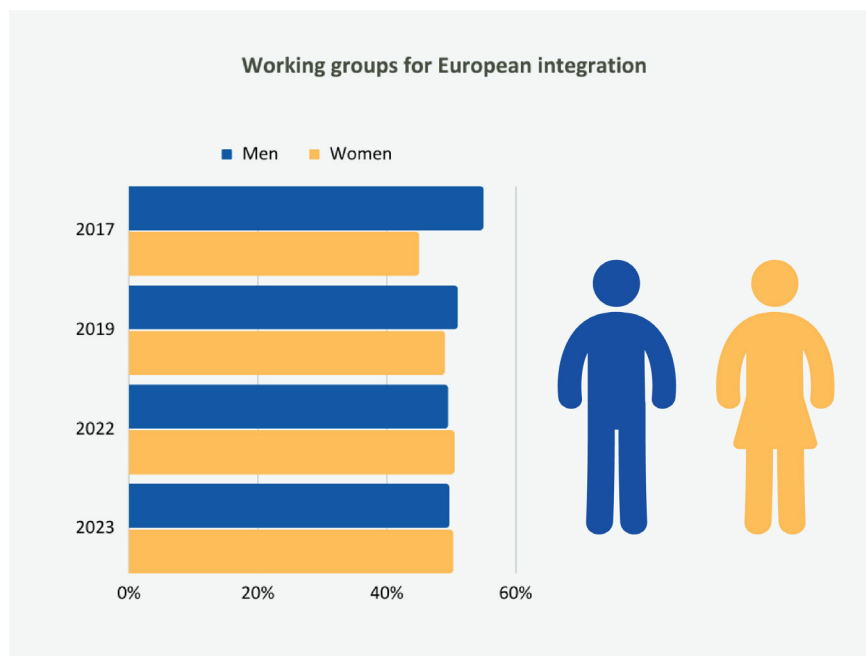
24 Priority No. 11, [https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu\\_1666693844.pdf](https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu_1666693844.pdf)

25 [https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu\\_1666693844.pdf](https://europa.ba/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/izvjestaj-o-bosni-i-hercegovini-za-2022-godinu_1666693844.pdf)

Working groups for European integration are operational bodies in the system of coordination that act in line with the guidelines laid down by the Commission for European Integration. There are 36 working groups established in line with the *acquis* and the chapters and articles of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. The working groups comprise representatives of competent institutions at all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with their constitutional competence for the respective areas for which the Working Groups were established.<sup>26</sup> Each working group has a chairperson and two deputies who rotate in these positions every six months. For the effective implementation of tasks from the scope of the working group, subgroups may be formed from members of the working group, whose composition and tasks are determined by the working group with the consent of the Commission for European Integration.

The chairperson of the working group, with the prior consent of two deputies, can invite to the working group meeting representatives of ministries and other administrative bodies in BiH who are not members of the working group, **representatives of non-governmental organizations**, scientific and professional workers and other persons who have data and professional knowledge relevant for the work of the working group, but without the right to vote. According to available data, so far representatives of non-governmental organizations have not been involved in the work of working groups.

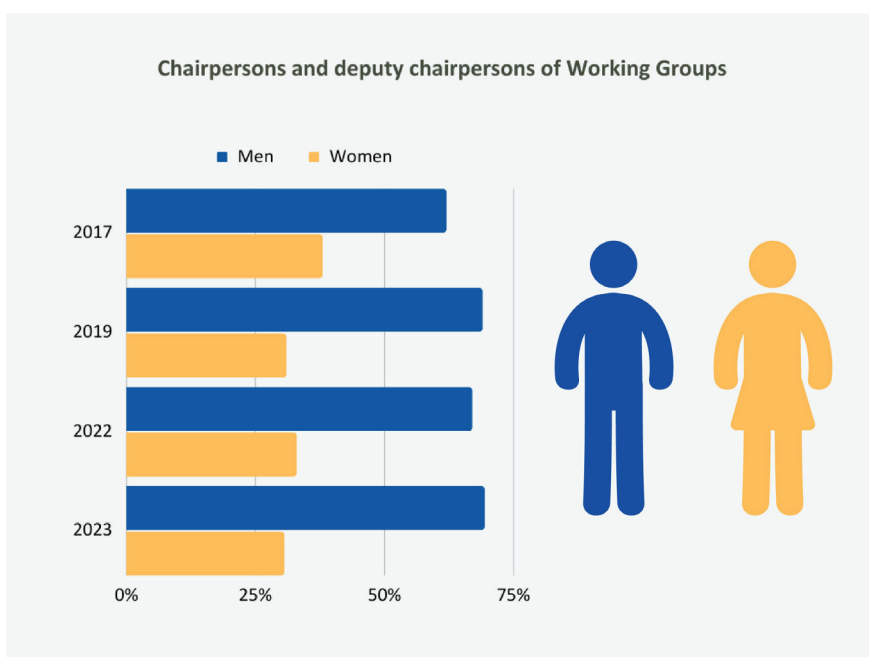
Working groups are actually the bodies that carry the biggest burden of work in the integration process. Here, too, the gender structure is different relative to political bodies and the gender ratio is fairly even. According to 2017 data, the working groups comprised 55% men and 45% women. The composition in 2019 was very similar, with a slight increase in the number of women in these bodies (51% men and 49% women). According to data from 2022, the working groups comprised 49,5% of men and 50,5% of women. The latest data from 2023 show a slight increase in the representation of women within work groups so at the time of this analysis, women were represented by 49,7% relative to 50,3% of men. This only shows that the trend of greater representation of women in lower, operational bodies that have no decision-making power continues.



26 <http://www.sluzbenilist.ba/page/akt/vLPs8vgztz5k76kpn45h9L6l=>

Zooming into appointed **chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of Working Groups**, we see men dominating these positions. This situation is unchanging since 2017 when 62% of the chairpersons and their deputies were men and 38% were women. The gender ratio in these positions in 2019 was 69% to 31% in favor of men. According to the data collected for the second half of 2022, the situation is nearly the same with 67% of men and 33% of women in the position of chairpersons and their deputies. Finally, in 2023, the gender ratio was 69,4% to 30,6% in favor of men.

The data on the participation of women and men in technical and operational bodies once again confirm the existence of the so-called glass ceiling, an unacknowledged barrier to advancement or appointment to higher political and other important positions, that affects women. Thus, women bear a major burden of work in the work of working groups, the Coordination Mechanism bodies that do most of the work. But even there they are not equal because most chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of the working groups are again men.



With the aim of supervising the implementation of the SAA and ensuring an appropriate functional connection between bodies of the internal system of coordination of the European integration process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the one hand, and acting and advocating an agreed “one voice” on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the joint bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union, on the other hand,<sup>27</sup> the following standing delegations of BiH were established:

- Standing Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Stabilization and Association Council,
- Standing Delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Stabilization and Association Committee,
- Standing Delegations of BiH within the Stabilization and Association Subcommittees, and
- Standing Delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina within other joint bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union, as established in accordance with the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

The members of these delegations are appointed by the BiH Council of Ministers, taking into account the relevant constitutional competences and different levels of government. The joint bodies of the EU and BiH, which were formed to monitor the application and implementation of the SAA, are important actors in the EU accession process. The SAA represents a tool that provides formal mechanisms and time frames for reforms that will bring BiH closer to EU standards, and since its signing, the BiH institutions are obliged to gradually align existing laws and future legislation with the regulations of the European Union, as well as to ensure the full implementation of the existing and future legislation.<sup>28</sup>

*The following joint bodies of the EU and BiH were established to supervise the application and implementation of the SAA29:*

The Stabilization and Association Council, which is made up of members of the EU Council and EC and members of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

- The Parliamentary Committee for Stabilization and Association, that is, the forum of deputies of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Parliament
- The Stabilization and Association Committee, as a technical body that assists the Stabilization and Association Council in the execution of its duties
- seven Subcommittees<sup>30</sup> and the Special Public Administration Reform Group operating under the authority of the Stabilization and Association Committee

The composition of the committee and the subcommittees was not the subject of this gender analysis, given that the contact institutions and officials depended on the received agenda proposal from the European Commission, and the areas within the committee and subcommittees that will be discussed at the meetings.

27 Official Gazette of BiH no. 72/16

28 [https://europa.ba/?page\\_id=493](https://europa.ba/?page_id=493)

29 <https://www.dei.gov.ba/bs/stabilization-agreement>

30 Sub-committee on Trade, Industry, Customs and Taxation, Sub-committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, Sub-committee on Internal Market and Competition, Sub-committee on Economic and Financial Issues and Statistics, Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security, Sub-committee on Innovation, Information Society and Social Policy, and Sub-committee on Transport, Energy, Environment and Regional Development

From the adoption of the BiH Council of Ministers' Decision on the launch of the initiative for Bosnia and Herzegovina's accession to the European Union (1999) until the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2015, the BiH's accession to the European Union had the continuous support of the wider public and was recognized throughout the country as the single most important objective for BiH's future security and prosperity. However, since then there has been a certain decline in public support, and research shows that citizens feel they do not have enough information about the European integration process.<sup>31</sup>

This was one of the reasons for developing a new Communication Strategy on BiH's Accession to the European Union from the candidate status to the full membership.<sup>32</sup> (hereinafter the Strategy).

The main objective of the Strategy is to ensure a better understanding of the European integration process that would enable the general public to form an opinion on the process of BiH's accession to the European Union based on verified and timely information. The strategy introduces a new approach that implies active engagement of all institutions in BiH with various stakeholders and the public in accordance with its scope of work and competence, and the Directorate for European Integration is the central point of these activities. Under the Strategy, Directorate for European Integration will be preparing annual action plans based on contributions received from delegated civil servants from the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina responsible for their implementation. The implementation of the Strategy began with the acquisition of BiH's candidate status, and the new strategic approach will apply until BiH is awarded full membership in the EU.

It is important to point out that the Strategy, among other actors, recognizes the importance and role of civil society in the development and implementation of public policies as an important element of European integration. The relevance of regular dialogue with civil society and citizens is the basis for a successful European integration process and greatly contributes to a better understanding of the reform processes that are an inevitable part of European integration.

The need and importance of including civil society and the academic community in public debates on specific topics from sectoral policies that will be organized and implemented in the integration process is recognized. Thus, the Strategy proposes the use of networks of civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a proven channel of communication, as well as the media (electronic, written, and online), and websites of competent institutions. Connecting BiH institutions with civil society, inter alia through cooperation with the media and the academic community, contributes not only to a better understanding of the change that will happen in society but also to winning stronger public support for these processes. However, the Strategy does not recognize the importance of including civil society organizations that focus on gender equality and the protection of women's human rights, which are the only stakeholders with necessary gender mainstreaming expertise in the overall European integration process.

31 [https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/strategija-komuniciranja-institucija-bih-o-procesu-pristupanja-bosne-i-hercegovine-evropskoj-uniji-od-kandidatskog-statusa-do-clanstva\\_1608888201.pdf](https://www.dei.gov.ba/uploads/documents/strategija-komuniciranja-institucija-bih-o-procesu-pristupanja-bosne-i-hercegovine-evropskoj-uniji-od-kandidatskog-statusa-do-clanstva_1608888201.pdf) (uvid 12.04.2023.)

32 Ibid.

Under the Law on Gender Equality, state bodies at all levels of organizations of authorities, and local self-government bodies, including legislative, executive, and judicial authorities, political parties, legal persons with public authorities, legal persons that are in the state's property or under the state's control, entities, cantons, cities or municipalities whose work is under control of a public body, shall ensure and promote equal gender representation in process of managing, decision making and representation. Equal gender representation is deemed to exist when one of the sexes is represented with **at least 40%** in all aforementioned bodies.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the legal obligation to do so, laws on governments in BiH at all levels are not harmonized with the Law on Gender Equality.<sup>34</sup> As a result, women are not equally represented in the positions of prime ministers and ministers at the state, entity, and cantonal levels, and are excluded from political and reform-related decision-making, including from the European integration process, as shown in this gender analysis.

All bodies of the Coordination Mechanism, a key institutional body for the European integration process, have a total of 2,020 members, elected officials, and civil servants from 14 government levels (state, entity, and cantonal level). It comprises 36 working groups that cover all chapters of the EU *acquis*, as well as political and economic criteria.

Gender analysis of these bodies shows that women are significantly less represented, especially in the so-called political bodies in which all important political decisions are made because the members of these bodies are determined by the position they hold in the executive power (prime minister or minister, for example). This further contributes to the marginalization of women from the key political decision-making positions in the European integration process.

Women are slightly more represented in the so-called technical and operational bodies, i.e., the bodies that make no significant political decisions but conduct necessary procedures and activities in the European integration process. But even in these operational and technical bodies, they are not equal when it comes to the positions of chairpersons or their deputies. Again, these positions are dominated by men. And, again, women are not in decision-making positions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina must, without delay, take concrete steps toward the practical application of all laws and other requirements set ahead of it in the process of European integration. Ensuring the full application of the Law on Gender Equality and other anti-discrimination laws that provide for equal participation of women in all political and other reform processes, also implies the obligation of equal inclusion of women in the bodies of the Coordination Mechanism.

This gender analysis showed that women are the underrepresented sex in the Coordination Mechanism, which is particularly visible in political bodies and the positions of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of working groups.

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union and as such must be integrated into the EU accession process through numerous reforms which await each candidate country, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>33</sup> Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina/refined text, Article 20. [https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ZoRS\\_32\\_10\\_B.pdf](https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ZoRS_32_10_B.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Law on Gender Equality in BiH, Article 32: "All State and Entity laws and other relevant regulations shall be brought into conformity with the provisions of this Law within six months at the latest." [https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ZoRS\\_32\\_10\\_B.pdf](https://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ZoRS_32_10_B.pdf)

- Harmonize the Law on the Council of Ministers of BiH, the Law on Government of FBiH, and the Law on the Government of RS with the Law on Gender Equality to ensure that the composition of the Government cannot be confirmed unless the requirement of a minimum of 40% of women in ministerial positions is met;
- Ensure, also, a full application of the Law on Gender Equality in appointing persons to the technical and operational bodies of the Coordination Mechanism, both as members and in the position of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons.
- After each election cycle, a gender analysis of all bodies of the Coordination Mechanism should be made, and work on the trend of equal participation of women in all positions.
- Ensure the implementation of appropriate training programs to raise awareness about mandatory gender balance following domestic anti-discrimination legislation for all persons involved in the work of the Coordination Mechanism
- Ensure regular participation of civil society organizations in the relevant bodies of the Coordination Mechanism where their participation is foreseen.







