



Public Statement of the Center for Gender Justice on the Rejection of the Local Gender Equality Action Plan in the Municipality of Durrës

The rejection of the Local Gender Equality Action Plan by the Municipal Council of Durrës, as a result of the misinterpretation of the concept of the **gender-transformative approach**, is a deeply concerning development for the rights of women and girls, as well as for the quality of public decision-making.

A **gender-transformative approach** is not about changing a person's gender identity, civil status, or the legal definition of the family. Rather, it is an internationally recognized approach to public policymaking that seeks to address gender stereotypes, discriminatory social norms, and structural barriers that prevent women and men from enjoying equal rights and opportunities. This has also been clarified by the Municipality of Durrës and UN Women during the public discussions surrounding the adoption of the Local Gender Equality Action Plan.

The **gender-transformative approach** is widely used by international organizations such as UN Women, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the design and implementation of policies aimed at achieving gender equality.

At its core, this approach does **not** seek to change people's biological sex or gender identity. Instead, it seeks to transform the unequal social norms, stereotypes, and power relations that create or reinforce discrimination against women and girls, while also addressing restrictive gender norms affecting men and boys.

What does a gender-transformative approach mean in practice?

A gender-transformative approach aims to:

- challenge harmful gender stereotypes (for example, the belief that women should be solely responsible for family care or that men should not express emotions);
- address the root causes of gender inequality, rather than merely its consequences;
- promote the equal participation of women and men in decision-making;
- engage men and boys as allies in advancing gender equality; and
- transform institutional practices that create or perpetuate inequality.

A simple example

If a municipality finds that very few women participate in public consultations:

- A **gender-neutral approach** would organize the consultation without making any adjustments.

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- **A gender-sensitive approach** would recognize that women participate less frequently and encourage their participation.
- **A gender-transformative approach** would examine why women are underrepresented, for example, due to meeting schedules, childcare responsibilities, social norms, or lack of information, and would redesign the consultation process to remove those barriers.

In other words, it is not enough to simply say that "women are welcome to participate"; the conditions that prevent their meaningful participation must also be addressed.

Is it related to gender identity?

This is one of the most common misconceptions.

In the context of public policy, a **gender-transformative approach** is **not synonymous with discussions on gender identity or sexual orientation**. It refers to the way public policies are designed and implemented to eliminate inequalities between women and men by addressing the social norms, institutional practices, and structural barriers that produce and sustain those inequalities.

In the context of Albania's Gender Equality Law

Within the framework of Albania's Gender Equality Law, this approach means that public institutions should develop policies that not only respond to the consequences of gender inequality but also address its structural causes. This may include:

- policies that promote women's economic empowerment and employment;
- measures to increase women's representation in decision-making;
- preventing and responding to gender-based and domestic violence;
- implementing gender-responsive budgeting; and
- eliminating gender stereotypes in education, the media, and public institutions.

In short, a gender-transformative approach does **not** seek to change people; it seeks to transform the social conditions and norms that generate inequality so that women and men can enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and participation.

The Local Gender Equality Action Plan does not amend Albanian legislation or create new legal categories. Its purpose is to improve the lives of citizens by:

- strengthening women's economic empowerment;
- increasing women's participation in decision-making;
- improving social services;
- preventing and responding to violence against women and domestic violence; and

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- ensuring that local policies and budgets take into account the different needs of women, men, girls, and boys.

As an organization that has actively contributed to the advocacy and protection of Albania's Gender Equality Law, we reiterate that public policies must be based on facts, legal standards, and professional expertise, not on misinformation or inaccurate interpretations.

Gender equality does not undermine the family. On the contrary, it contributes to building a more just and inclusive society in which every woman, man, girl, and boy has equal opportunities to live with dignity, safety, and full participation in social life.

We call upon local institutions and all political actors to ensure that debates on public policies are conducted on the basis of accurate information, legal obligations, and the best interests of citizens.

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