

Women Economic Forum – Balkans 2024
2-day Event

1. General Information

Organization Committee President/ Country Chair CAMWing: Makedonka Dimitrova/
Lenka Ugrinovska

E-mail address: makedonka.md@gmail.com/ leni.ugrinovska@gmail.com /
contact@elite-awm.mk

Phone/Mobile: +389 70226666, +389 75456062

Organizer/s:

- Association of Women Managers ELIT Skopje (formal organization, since 2009)
- G100 Mission Million, non formal group represented in all Balkan Countries, Communication and Advocacy Wing Macedonia (<https://www.g100.in/about-us/>) and Women Economic Forum (<https://www.wef.org.in/>)¹

2. About the Conference

Women Economic Forum – Balkans 2024 will play an instrumental role in connecting businesses and CSOs via conversations, debates, best practices, personal connections and collaborations among women (and men) not just in the Western Balkans & Turkiye (WBT) but wider as we seek out to be and act as unique voice for women empowerment.

The two-days forum will bring together over 200+ attendees, some of which belong to different country wings under the auspices of G100 Million mission. The novelty is in showcasing that the informal groups, for ex. the local co-host, Communication and Advocacy Wing Macedonia- G100 Million, could be as powerful and influential as the formal CSOs such as the co-host Association of Women Managers ELIT Skopje. Together, we stand strong to support the societal changes towards women equality and governance across different organizations, activists and nations. While each wing in the respective countries is an extended hand and provides powerful advocacy, awareness & impact across governments, business and related organizations for a gender equal future in this decade, we need further support to bridge the cooperation gap among the key stakeholders.

3. Conference Objectives

¹ The event was generously welcomed by WEF and its already publicized on their website, link above

The Forum will catalyze transformative change across multiple sectors in the society via active women of impact engagement. Participants will share and gain insights into gender issues in business and CSOs with an emphasis of the role and the power of women in supporting STEM initiatives, responsible reporting- ESG and building stronger CSOs via improved governance models and links with the businesses. The participants' will acquire practical strategies from successful initiatives with long lasting opportunity to integrate gender-inclusive practices and responsible management into daily operations, leading to concrete actions for women's empowerment.

The forum will forge new working relationships, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders in civil society, businesses, and academia.

By showcasing women champions and sharing best practices, the forum will elevate the visibility of gender-inclusive initiatives. Ultimately, it will drive a paradigm shift towards more equitable societies, benefiting not only the participants' and their organizations but also broader stake, policymakers and communities beyond the WBT, as the Forum welcomes world renowned practitioners and both women and men (men) leaders.

4. Conference Program

The objectives are to foster conversations, relevant community participation, connections and collaborations among women and women supporters in the countries of WBT, and they are reflected in the draft Agenda, see below:

AGENDA (Draft)

Skopje, North Macedonia, 2-3 October, 2024, Hotel Holiday Inn/Marriot Skopje
Day 1

Wednesday, 2nd October 2024

09.45 Welcome Address: Setting the Tone for Gender Equality

09.45 **Her Excellency, prof. dr Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, President of Republic of N. Macedonia, tbc.**

09.50 **Lenka Ugrunovska, doctor honoris causa, Country Chair of North Macedonia, G100 Communication, Advocacy and Mediation Wing**

10.00 – 10.30 **Keynote Interview: Empowering Women in Civil Society for long-lasting positive changes with Dr. Harbeen Aurora Rai, founder G100 & Women Economic Forum**

Interviewee: prof. Makedonka Dimitrova, PhD c., ECOS Skopje | Former Energy Globe Ambassador for Macedonia | G100 Communication, Advocacy & Mediation Wing, Zlokukjani Chair North Macedonia

10.30 – 11.50 **Panel 1: Integrating Sustainability Today via ESG Reporting**

Moderator: Ms. Zsuzsanna Hargitai, Managing Director, Central Asia at EBRD, tbc.

Panelists:

- Ms. Anita Angelovska Bezhoska, PhD, Governor of the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia | North Macedonia tbc
- Ms. Maja Stevkova Shterieva, PhD, CFO at Komercijalna Banka AD Skopje | Macedonian Banking Association President
- Dr. Irena P. Radović, Governor of Central Bank of Montenegro, Global Chair Financial Inclusion and Board Readiness Wing | Montenegro
- Croatia/Turkiye/Bosnia, social component related speaker
- **EU/EIB, Environmental sector representative from EU**

12.00 – 13.30 **Panel 2: Breaking Glass Ceiling and Shaping the Future of Women in Business**

Moderator: prof d-r Blagica Novkovska, Associate Professor at Economic Faculty, University of Skopje, North Macedonia

Panelists:

- **Sanja Popovic Pantic**, Head of Science and Technology Policy Research Center in Institute Mihajlo Pupin | President of the Association of Business Women in Serbia | EEN TG Women Entrepreneurship Chair | G100 Global Chair for MSM Enterprises | Serbia tbc.

- **Albania**

- **Turkiye**

- Zvezdana Oluić – G100 Montenegro Country Chair for MSME (Head of the Department for PR and Marketing in MEF) | **Montenegro**

13.40 – 15.00 **Panel 3: Women IN STEM Driving the Change in Western Balkans and Türkiye**

- **Moderator: Gabriela Kostovska Bogoeska**, Co-founder & executive director at Foundation for Management and Industrial Research, President of the BoD at Youth Entrepreneurial Service Foundation, WEgate Community Coordinator

Panelists:

- **Teuta Sahatqija**, CEO @ TDSconsulting LLC | CMC(R), CDTE| Women in Tech Kosovo Ambassador | Kosovo
- **Aneta Antova Peseva**, Honorary Consul of Canada in North Macedonia | President of Assembly at MASIT ICT Chamber of Commerce | CEO of Ultra-Unet Group

15.00 – 16.00 Lunch and Networking

Day 2

Thursday, 3rd October 2024

09.00 – 09.30 Registration

09.30 – 11.00

Panel 1: Women in Civil Society: Shaping Governance Structures

Moderator:

Panelists:

11.00 – 12.30

Panel 2: Denim Business Leaders' Support to Female Workers and CSOs initiatives in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Moderator:

Panelists: EDMOND HAJRIZI, Dr. Edmond Hajrizi, is an academic, entrepreneur, and expert in the fields of management, information technology, and engineering. As the Founder, President, and CEO of the University for Business and Technology (UBT) | Albania

12.30 – 13.00

Closing Talk: Towards a Digital & Gender-Inclusive Future

13.00 – 13.10

Closing Remarks and Key Messages: Makedonka Dimitrova

13.15 – 14.00 Networking Cocktail

POSTER EXHIBITION: Showcasing Women Champions in Business Initiatives that support women in need – Towards a Gender-Inclusive Future and Building Strong Connections with CSOs

We plan the organizational staff to send invitations, to follow up and communicate with the panelists, as each panel will have one moderator and 4-5 panelists. The country chairs of G100 across all WB countries and Turkiye will help us in targeting and attracting high profiled panelists that will bring value to the attended and will send a strong message on gender-Inclusive Future.

5. Background Information

Gender equality is no longer a women's issue or one country's issue but one that concerns us all. Like in the case of the pandemic, or climate change, or terrorism, gender inequality

as well is a global challenge that needs concerted effort by all to combat and overcome. With engagement and exchange, we would enable gender equality to be viewed and pursued by all as an urgent social and economic imperative toward co-creating a better future for us all.

There are millions CSOs across the WBT Region and the world, but only one informal G100- Million stands out as a remarkable force for gender equality, comprising hundreds influential women leaders from diverse spheres worldwide, alongside He-for-She champions in the Denim Club and a million gender champions. About 600 women champions are coming from the countries of WBT. Together we could raise our voice from Skopje, WBT & Europe within this world wide interdisciplinary and inclusive platform to dismantle barriers to women's leadership and participation. We will take advantage of community leaders to inspire and support changes towards gender equity and empower women. We would like to take this opportunity and show that European women is action-oriented, praises research and manages in a fair environment, yet still faces challenges of glass ceiling and discrimination. We will raise a voice from Europe to the world that we are sharing the similar values and fears and that sharing is caring, so the power is in our domain to make the changes.

On the other hand, the participants and beyond, via the promo channels, will be encouraged to participate and act via non-formal groups, such as our Wing and G100. We will be happy to support the paradigm shift to experience better tomorrow for us and the future generations.

6. Target Attendees and Audience

Our main target attendees both in person and online are as follows:

- Business Associations and Women in Business via the Chambers of Commerce or business networks with a focus on women entrepreneurship, Women-led business associations or networks supporting women-owned enterprises, Industry-specific associations interested in promoting gender diversity and inclusion.
- Financial Institutions and IFIs
- Civil Society Organizations: women's rights organizations advocating for gender equality and empowerment, Community-based organizations working on women's issues at the grassroots level, NGOs focusing on economic development and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, Organizations promoting women's participation in STEM fields and innovation.
- Government Agencies, Ministries & Agencies overseeing policies and programs related to CSOs, entrepreneurship, STEM education, and workforce development.
- Academic Institutions.

- International Organizations, FES North Macedonia, EU Delegation or specific projects, EU Delegations, UN Women, USAID
- Regional organizations focusing on economic development and gender mainstreaming in the Balkans and Turkey.

7. Venue/Country

Three years ago, when G100's founder Dr Harbeen Arora Rai and her team conducted a tour of the Western Balkans, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Montenegro organized small scale events and the main event Women Economic Forum was held in Tirana, Albania with strong presence from all Wings from WB.

Together, our voice is stronger, so we proposed to G100 and Women Economic Forum to have one main event for the whole region. The event is published at their site, please see <https://www.wef.org.in/>

Therefore, we propose the event to take place in the **Holiday Inn Hotel**, in the center of Skopje (capital), North Macedonia.

Skopje is a place that is well connected by land and air and is convenient for land/air travel with all WB countries and beyond. Also, there is a big parking lot nearby. There will be a possibility for in person and online follow up of the two-day event, the in person presence for the first day is limited to 120+ attendees, while the second day will welcome up to 80+ participants.