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Civil Society Report Prepared by Women's Coalition, EWL Coordination for Türkiye and Patiska Platform on the Beijing+30 - 15.01.2025

Who is who:

The Patiska Platform, a non-profit organisation founded in December 2022 with representatives in Brussels and the USA, is dedicated to supporting women who are marginalized due to age, economic discrimination, and lack of access to new technologies. As societies age, older women face significant challenges, particularly in the digital age, where advancements in technology such as artificial intelligence risk leaving them behind. Many older women, particularly those in poverty, struggle to keep pace with technological advancements, increasing their sense of isolation and exclusion from society.

The exclusion of older women from the digital world has far-reaching consequences, both at the individual and societal levels. It weakens social cohesion and solidarity, underscoring the urgent need for policies to address their integration into the digital world. These policies should focus on gender equality, taking into account the unique challenges faced by older women, and aim to improve their socio-economic conditions, reduce exclusion, and enhance their societal position.

The Patiska Platform works to raise awareness about the issues faced by older women, including social exclusion, economic discrimination, and limited access to technology. It actively develops and implements training programs designed to empower older women, equipping them with the necessary skills to thrive in the digital age. Through these efforts, the platform aims to bridge the digital divide, promote inclusivity, and ensure that older women can fully engage in and contribute to modern society.

The Women's Coalition is an organisation where women's organisations from all over Türkiye come together to join forces for equality, freedom, and justice. Since 2002, the Coalition has been advocating locally, nationally, and internationally for the equal participation of women in all areas of social, economic, and political life. It aims to strengthen women's participation in politics, to find different ways to participate in politics and the public sphere, and to develop tools for feminist intervention in local politics. It seeks to influence political processes in line with these objectives. To this end, it monitors and intervenes in local governments, municipalities, public administration, and the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men, in Parliament. It strives to influence the formulation, decision-making, and implementation of national and international gender policies. Additionally, it seeks to participate in the legislative process and drafts proposals and opinions on various laws, including the Constitution, the Law on Political Parties and Elections, the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities, the Law on Aid



Collection, and the Law on Internal Security, among others. But its engagement is not limited to national law, it also takes into account the international aspects of the women's struggle.

The Avrupa Kadın Lobisi Türkiye Koordinasyonu (EWL Coordination for Türkiye) is a nationwide women's platform established in 2004, uniting a wide array of feminist organisations from various regions and sectors of Türkiye. The coordination is part of the broader European Women's Lobby (EWL), which connects feminist and women's movements across Europe. EWL Coordination for Türkiye serves as a bridge between Türkiye's feminist advocacy and European gender equality policies, working to influence both national and international agendas.

The primary goals and activities of the EWL Coordination for Türkiye include:

Engagement with EU Policies from a Feminist Perspective: The Coordination aims to actively influence European Union policies, ensuring that feminist viewpoints are integrated into EU decision-making processes. This involves pushing for policies that promote gender equality and protect the rights of women.

Public Advocacy for the EU Feminist Agenda: One of the key objectives is to mobilize public opinion and apply pressure to ensure that EU feminist agendas are implemented. The platform organizes campaigns, raises awareness, and collaborates with other feminist groups across Europe and beyond to advocate for gender justice.

Involvement in Türkiye's EU Membership Process: The platform plays a crucial role in shaping Türkiye's EU membership discussions from a feminist perspective. It ensures that women's rights and gender equality remain at the forefront of Türkiye's negotiations with the European Union.

Advocacy for EU Equality Acquis: The EWL Coordination for Türkiye's works to align Türkiye's laws and policies with EU standards related to gender equality. By collaborating with women's movements in Türkiye and globally, the platform ensures that Türkiye's legal and policy frameworks reflect international commitments to women's rights.

The Coordination is committed to strengthening the voice of feminist movements in Türkiye and advocating for women's rights and gender equality at the European level. It provides an essential link between the national feminist community in Türkiye and broader international initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality.



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Joint report for Beijing+30

Economic Inequality and Gender Pay Gap: Women, particularly in Türkiye, face systemic economic inequalities, including a significant gender pay gap and limited access to financial resources and decent work opportunities. These persistent barriers hinder their economic empowerment and perpetuate gender-based disparities in the workforce.

Conflicts, Disasters, and Their Impact on Women: Women are disproportionately affected by conflicts and natural disasters, facing exclusion from decision-making processes and recovery efforts. It is crucial to prioritize their empowerment and participation in building resilience and shaping recovery strategies.

Gender-based Violence and Implementation of the Istanbul Convention: Gender-based violence remains a pervasive and urgent issue, posing significant challenges despite ongoing efforts to address it. The full implementation of the Istanbul Convention is essential to effectively combat violence against women and ensure their safety and dignity. However, progress is hindered by persistent societal attitudes and systemic obstacles, including the prevalence of family-oriented state policies that prioritize traditional family structures over individual rights and safety.

Such policies often undermine the rights of women by emphasizing reconciliation and familial unity, even in cases of domestic violence, thereby discouraging survivors from seeking help or justice. This approach shifts the focus away from the protection and empowerment of women, contributing to a lack of accountability for perpetrators and perpetuating cycles of violence.

Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention represents a significant setback in the fight against gender-based violence. It is crucial for Türkiye to re-sign and fully implement the Convention, setting an example for other nations. Additionally, countries that have not yet ratified or implemented the Convention must be strongly encouraged to do so, ensuring a unified and robust international effort to protect women's rights and combat violence.

Intersectionality and Inclusion of mostly excluded groups: Women who are among those excluded the most, including refugees, women with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, face multiple layers of discrimination that heighten their vulnerabilities. Tackling these unique challenges demands intersectional approaches to policy-making and advocacy, ensuring that diverse identities and experiences are fully recognized and addressed in efforts to foster equality and inclusion.

In Türkiye, persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers in accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, and employment. Despite some progress in implementing inclusive policies, discrimination and social exclusion remain widespread. Accessibility in public spaces, transportation, and digital services is often inadequate, limiting their participation in society. Economic independence is hindered by structural barriers, job discrimination, and limited opportunities. The Beijing+30 review emphasizes the importance of addressing the rights of persons with disabilities within the broader gender



equality framework, urging governments to adopt inclusive policies and ensure accessibility for all. In line with the Beijing+30 commitments, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive legislation to guarantee equal rights, promote accessible infrastructure, and combat societal stigma. Strengthening awareness campaigns, improving accessibility standards, and enforcing anti-discrimination laws are critical steps toward achieving greater inclusion and equality for persons with disabilities in Türkiye, in accordance with the global call for transformative change in the next decade.

Older women in Türkiye, as in many other countries, face distinct challenges that require focused attention in the context of gender equality. Within the framework of the 12 critical areas outlined by the Beijing+30 review, issues such as economic inequality, healthcare access, and violence against women are particularly relevant for older women. Many older women experience financial insecurity due to lower lifetime earnings, inadequate pension systems, and limited access to social security. The gender pay gap and lack of economic opportunities exacerbate their vulnerability in later life. Additionally, older women often face age-based discrimination, which can lead to exclusion from the labour market, healthcare, and social activities, affecting their quality of life. The Beijing+30 review stresses the need to create inclusive policies that ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and social protection while addressing ageism and gender-based violence. Older women are also at higher risk of experiencing abuse and neglect, often within the home. Therefore, it is crucial for Türkiye to implement stronger legal frameworks, ensure access to appropriate health services, and promote active participation of older women in all aspects of public and social life to align with the commitments of Beijing+30 for achieving gender equality across generations.

Women's Political Participation and Leadership: Significant barriers continue to hinder women's participation in political processes, particularly in decision-making spaces, where their voices remain underrepresented. Achieving gender parity in political participation and representation is critical for fostering inclusive governance and ensuring that diverse perspectives shape policies and decisions. Strengthening quotas and affirmative action measures is essential to advancing women's political participation and representation, breaking systemic barriers, and paving the way for equal involvement in leadership and decision-making roles.

Empowering Women's organisations and Civil Society: Women's organisations and civil society groups play a vital role in advocating for gender equality and must be supported and empowered. Increased fundWomen's organizations and civil society groups are essential drivers of gender equality, advocating for policies and actions that advance women's rights. To strengthen their impact, it is critical that they are actively supported and empowered. Increased funding and resources for women-led initiatives are necessary to sustain progress, ensuring that these organizations can continue their transformative work and address the evolving challenges women face in society.ing and resources for women-led initiatives are essential for continued progress.

Environmental Conservation and Gender: Environmental policies frequently fail to integrate gender perspectives, leading to the exclusion of women, particularly those from rural and marginalized communities, from key environmental decision-making processes. To ensure more inclusive and effective solutions, it is crucial to adopt gender-sensitive approaches in environmental conservation and climate action. Additionally, there must be increased support for women's leadership in these fields, empowering them to drive meaningful change and contribute to sustainable development.



Impact Agents and Civil Society Suppression: In Türkiye, the term "impact agents" has been used to target civil society organisations and activists, particularly those advocating for gender equality, human rights, and environmental protection. This labeling fosters an environment of suspicion towards advocacy efforts, undermining the vital work of women's organizations and activists and discouraging their contributions to social progress. The draft law, which aims to limit the research and freedom of expression of journalists and civil society organisations, threatens democracy under the guise of protecting the state. This regulation opens the door to a mechanism that would criminalise any information or activity that is not aligned with the state's interests.

Impact of Digitalisation on Gender Equality: Digitalisation is a double-edged sword in the context of gender equality, as it presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, technology has the potential to empower women by providing access to education, healthcare, financial services, and job opportunities. It can serve as a tool for advocacy, networking, and building resilience, especially in rural or marginalized communities. The Beijing+30 review highlights the importance of leveraging digital tools to advance women's rights, by enhancing their participation in the economy, politics, and decision-making processes.

On the other hand, the digital divide continues to be a significant barrier for women, particularly older women, in many regions. In Türkiye, as in other parts of the world, older women are disproportionately affected by digital illiteracy. Many face challenges in accessing and utilizing digital technology due to a lack of training, infrastructure, and resources. This digital exclusion limits their ability to benefit from the opportunities digitalisation offers, especially in areas such as education, health services, and social participation. For older women, these barriers often result in social isolation, reduced access to vital services, and diminished political participation.

The Beijing+30 framework emphasizes the need to ensure that digitalisation is inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of age or gender. Governments and civil society must prioritize initiatives to bridge the digital divide by offering digital literacy programs, improving internet access, and designing technology that is user-friendly for older women. Furthermore, digital platforms should be leveraged to increase the visibility of gender issues and provide spaces for marginalized women, ensuring that the benefits of digitalisation contribute to gender equality in a meaningful way.

National Machineries for Women:

It needs to be kept in mind that institutional mechanisms mandated to enhance gender equality policies may paradoxically serve the regime's conservative agenda. In authoritarian regimes, national machineries for women often face significant challenges, bodies aimed at promoting gender equality may be marginalized or co-opted to serve the regime's conservative agenda rather than advancing women's rights and gender equality which leads to backlash at state-level institutions as can be observed in the case of Türkiye:

- In 2011, The Ministry for Women, Family and Child Protection which was established back in 1991 was annulled and was renamed as the Ministry for Family and Social Policies by the authoritarian government in power.



- In 2021, the ministry was split into two different ministries and titled as Ministry for Family and Social Services, by openly erasing the word 'women' from its name once again.
- Omitting 'Women' from the name of the ministry (in 2011 and in 2021) has been a clear manifestation of the Government's priority on family policies and its weak focus on 'gender equality'. Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of the state exacerbated existing gender inequalities through the discourse, policies and implementations of the Institutional Mechanism.

Recommendations:

- Promote Policy Independence: Gender equality bodies must be granted legal and operational independence from executive authorities to safeguard their mandates. Clear legislative frameworks should be established, delineating the role of these institutions and protecting them from political interference.
- Strengthen International Oversight and Support: International organisations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and regional bodies, should establish robust monitoring frameworks to assess the effectiveness and integrity of national gender equality mechanisms. Regular reviews and public reporting can highlight instances where these mechanisms are being used to advance conservative or anti-equality agendas, ensuring accountability at both national and international levels.
- Empower Civil Society organisations (CSOs): Support for independent women's rights organisations and grassroots movements is essential. These organisations can serve as a counterbalance to state-controlled mechanisms, advocating for genuine gender equality policies. Financial and technical assistance from international donors should prioritize CSOs working in restrictive environments.
- Foster Regional Collaboration and Solidarity: Establish networks among gender equality institutions and activists across borders to share best practices, amplify voices, and build resilience against state-level co-optation. Regional alliances can create a unified stance against the erosion of women's rights.
- Inclusive Economic Policies: Implement policies that ensure equal access to financial resources, decent work, and social protection for women. This includes addressing the gender pay gap and expanding coverage for women, particularly in informal sectors.
- Close the Gender Pay Gap: Strengthen policies that promote equal pay for equal work, increase women's representation in leadership roles, and improve access to financial resources for women entrepreneurs.
- Strengthen Support for those who experience gender-based violence: Governments must enhance legal protections, strengthen victim support systems, and improve institutional frameworks to combat all forms of gender-based violence, including cyber violence.
- Realise parity / women's equal political participation: Promote women's participation in political decision-making. Establish systematic consultation platforms for women's organisations to ensure their voices are considered in policy decisions.
- Intersectional and Inclusive Approaches: Adopt policies that address the compounded forms of discrimination experienced by women with disabilities, refugees, and LGBTIQ+ women. Ensure these groups are included in political, economic, and social spheres.



- Increase Funding and Resources for Women's Initiatives: Provide greater financial support to women's organisations and initiatives, particularly those focused on women's economic empowerment, political participation, and environmental conservation.
- Gender-sensitive Environmental Policies: Incorporate gender perspectives in environmental policies and climate action plans. Increase funding for women-led environmental initiatives and encourage women's participation in climate-related decision-making. Support women in rural and indigenous communities to take leadership roles in environmental decision-making processes. Ensure that climate financing specifically targets gender-responsive environmental projects and women-led initiatives.
- Address Structural Barriers in Labor Markets: remove structural barriers to women's participation in the labour market, such as gender discrimination, inadequate social protection, and barriers to accessing childcare. Promote policies that facilitate women's entry into and retention in male-dominated sectors.
- Combat Anti-Gender Movements: Build coalitions to push back against anti-gender movements and ensure that gender equality remains a priority in policy discussions. Raise awareness and foster solidarity across regions to protect and advance women's rights.
- Strengthening Legal Protection, Prevention, and Enforcement: Not only in Türkiye but also in Europe and globally, it is crucial to strengthen legal frameworks, policies, and strategic mechanisms to safeguard women's rights and gender equality in areas such as family law, domestic violence, and sexual harassment. This includes not only enhancing legal protections but also ensuring effective prevention measures and accountability in the prosecution of offenders. It is essential that women receive not just legal protections on paper, but also practical and accessible support to ensure their safety and justice.
- Tackle Digital Divide and harmonise Digitalisation, and Gender Equality: To ensure gender equality in the digital age, it is essential to prioritize policies that bridge the digital divide by investing in digital literacy and access for women, particularly in underserved areas. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must work together to create inclusive and gender-responsive digital policies. This includes providing affordable internet access, training programs, and resources to empower women to fully participate in the digital economy. Furthermore, efforts should be made to address online violence and discrimination, ensuring that women can safely and confidently engage in digital spaces. To advance gender equality in the digital era, we must foster an environment where women are not just users of technology but also creators, leaders, and decision-makers in the digital landscape. This approach will contribute to a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable digital future for all.