



OSCE Networking Platform
of Women Leaders, including
Peacebuilders and Mediators

2022-2023 Edition

OSCE WOMEN'S PEACE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN'S LEADERS



I launched the OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme to support women's agency in peace processes at all levels. Their contributions are essential and need to be fully recognized."

*Helga Maria Schmid,
OSCE Secretary-General*





OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid with mentors and mentees at the launch of the first OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme, Vienna 17 October 2022. (OSCE/Luiza Lucia Puiu)

Women's leadership and inclusion in peace and conflict resolution efforts are at the core of the OSCE comprehensive approach to security. Women's meaningful inclusion is a precondition for achieving peace and stability across the OSCE and beyond. Despite the efforts made to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda, women from conflict and post-conflict environments continue to be under-represented or marginalized and under-represented from formal and informal peace processes, crisis management and post conflict recovery and reconstruction.

In recognition of the critical role that women play in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and in order to promote women's effective participation in peace and security efforts at all levels, in December 2021 the OSCE Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid launched the *Networking Platform for Women's Leaders, including Peacebuilders and Mediators*.

Within the framework of this platform, the OSCE Secretary General also launched the **OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Program**, a high level mentoring initiative designed to support and empower peacebuilders and conflict resolution experts from across the OSCE as well as Afghanistan.

The 1st edition of the Program, managed by the Secretariat Gender Issues Programme under the WIN project, that took place between October 2022 and October 2023, benefitted 12 young peacebuilders. During the one-year program, the participants engaged in high level and peer-to-peer mentorship with ten internationally renowned women leaders, including high-level mediators and diplomats, received extensive training on leadership, mediation, communication and international exposure.

KEY ACTIVITIES

→ In-person trainings and networking opportunities

The twelve participants received a four-day intensive training on mediation and dialogue facilitation, delivered by the Mediation Support Team of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Center. This training gave the participants a comprehensive tool-box to increase their competences and skills in mediation, negotiation and dialogue facilitation.

“*The training helped because it put me on the level to actually facilitate dialogue and it gave me the confidence to put my ideas forward in a crowded space with my colleagues.*”

“*I still use the meditation skills with my colleagues at work.*”



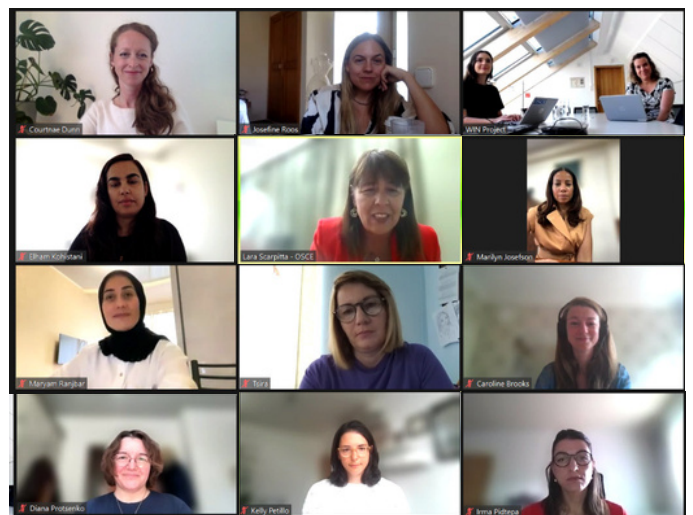
Participants of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme during the training on mediation and dialogue facilitation. Photo credits: OSCE/Vera Djemelinskaia

→ Online sessions - Community of Practice

The Community of Practice's Sessions stood at the core of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme. They are monthly, online gatherings that serve as a touch base for the core peace leadership group. Each session had a combination of open space for structured learning, peer mentoring and a self reflection practice. This structure created a safe space for storytelling, relationship building, and learning – with powerful results.

“*I was able to see that it wasn't just me facing some of these challenges at work. I felt less alone.*”

“*To be honest, I'm actually amazed (at our connection) using only online. I was a bit skeptical about how this would function but it did.*”



Fireside chat in May 2023 with EU Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Marilyn Josefson, and the OSCE Senior Advisor on Gender Issues Lara Scarpitta. Photo credit:OSCE

Community of Practice sessions were delivered by OSCE experts and partners. They included:

- **Foundations for Peace Leadership, inclusive leadership, mediation and dialogue facilitation.**
- **Foundations for resilience and trauma informed peacebuilding**
- **Peer Mentoring Learning Labs**
- **Communicating with Confidence, Presence and Influence**, delivered in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)
- **Understanding and Overcoming Opposition in Mediation** - the Polarity thinking model, in partnership with the GCSP
- **Leading in Complexity**

→ Peer-to-Peer and External Mentorship

The Peer-to-Peer mentoring formed a substantial component of the Programme and was central to fostering a professional network of practitioners. Drawing on an extraordinary pool of senior women mediators, diplomats and peacebuilders, a group of external mentors served as inspirational leaders to the core participants and engaged in a combination of small group story exchanges, ad-hoc advisory meetings and one-on-one mentoring throughout the year.

The mentors also shared their experience and advice with the participants during Virtual Fireside Chats. These closed-door discussions were extremely inspirational and impactful. The Fireside Chats also offered the opportunity to engage and receive updates on OSCE priorities from Dr. Lara Scarpitta, the OSCE Senior Gender Advisor. A team of Gender Issues Programme/ WIN project advisors and consultants supported the participants throughout the one-year process.

“ I appreciated that the mentoring started a few months into the programme. That made us more prepared, and started the individual work with more confidence.”

“ I gained so much perspective on my challenge. It was so helpful to be asked questions by peers with fresh eyes.”

✔ **Results: a strong network, a safe space and a reliable community**

The OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme enabled opportunities, connections and relationships that were valued as unique. Through the support and promotion of the Gender Issues Programme WIN Project, the participants engaged in external events, participated in panel discussions and additional networking opportunities. This enhanced their visibility, advocacy work and created occasions to access decision-makers with gravitas.



SUCCESS STORY:

Thanks to the help of one of the external mentors, one participant has now access to women of her country working in exile and has started her own peace work with this community.



Mentor Odeta Barbullushi, Advisor to Prime Minister of Albania, addresses the participations of the programme. Photo credit: OSCE/Lucia Puiu

“ We have become a small family, sharing personal life. The programme is a safe space where you can feel understood.”

“ The session on resilience was great, and the session on polarities was so significant. Those sessions transformed me. I am less stressed after the workshops on how to deal with stress, how to look more positively, not to worry about details, minor things.”

“ This community of high value women helped me set more boundaries in work. This helped me advance in my organisation and to make difficult decisions. Of course for me the most valuable has been the connections, the other women.”

“ Listening to my colleagues I feel less alone.”

“ When I joined the programme last year I was not sure about my career. For me this was really a career changing programme as I found my strength within peace leadership. Since I joined the programme I saw a very positive change, personally and professionally, now I am flying in my peacebuilding career.”

“ This programme changed my life. My attitudes. I am really happy to have met all the participants.”



Mentor Irene Fellin, Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, addresses the participants of the programme. Photo credit: OSCE/Lucia Puiu

✓ Results: Personal empowerment

Over half of the women changed jobs during the course of the programme. Six participants of the programme switched employers for better career opportunities. Two women increased their mandates within their current organizations.

“ This programme made me have the courage to make more decisions for myself. When I started I was not sure about the opportunities that I had, and I am better at balancing personal and professional as a result of the training.”



WHAT IS NEXT?

The second edition of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme will be launched in October 2023 with 16 new participants.

Stay tuned for more!

The activities of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme are implemented through the extrabudgetary project WIN.

Read more on the participants of the programme:
www.winprojectosce.org/womens-peace-leadership-programme

For more information on WIN activities:
www.winprojectosce.org

MENTORS



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FAWZIA KOOFI

Afghan politician, negotiator, women's rights activist, Nobel Peace Prize nominee



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NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security



MARILYN JOSEFSON

EU Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan



VESNA ŠKARE-OŽBOLT

Former Justice Minister, lead negotiator in the Balkan conflict



ODETA BARBULLUSHI

Advisor to the PM of Albania for EU Integration and Regional Cooperation, former Deputy Foreign Minister



DIANA PROTSENKO

Founder and former President of the National Association of Mediators of Ukraine, lawyer and senior lecturer



RAISA KADYROVA

Former President and founder of the Kyrgyz NGO Foundation of Tolerance International, Peace and women's rights activist



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