

# Empowering Women Through Rethinking the Care Economy: A Regional Analysis of Europe and Central Asia



**Date:**  
Friday, 12 March 2021,  
9:00-10:30 (CET)  
**Venue:** Online  
**Language:**  
English, Russian and  
Turkish

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## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the importance of care for the sustainability of life and its low visibility. As care and domestic work, both paid and unpaid, are mostly shouldered by women, gender inequalities have become more pronounced amid COVID-19 crisis. Women's amount of work dedicated to unpaid care has significantly increased due to the closure of care and education institutions, and the working conditions of paid care, mostly done by women, face more challenges. Many women had to leave their jobs or find part-time jobs to take care of children, sick or elderly in their families, which led to a sharp decline of their income and increased uncertainty in re-joining the labour market. Women's poverty increased in some countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia as many women previously informally employed were left with no job and social protection. As governments move from mitigating the immediate impact on COVID-19 to recovery, it is

crucial that comprehensive policy packages include the care sector through protection of jobs, public investment, stronger institutions, economic and fiscal policies that support care economy.

The regional analysis of the care economy through a gender lens in the context of the COVID-19 is at the core of the joint work between UNECE and Europe and Central Asia Regional Office of UN Women within the UN Development Account on *Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Response*. Studies conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and Republic of Moldova address empowering women by reducing unpaid work and increasing public investment in the care economy. Key findings about the post-pandemic recovery, challenges, and mainstreaming the care economy in the policy packages will be discussed at the event.

## OBJECTIVE

The event will discuss policy action and priorities to ensure that a post-pandemic recovery plan includes the care sector as a driver for women's empowerment in the ECE region. It will present main regional trends in paid and unpaid work of women, the impact of governments' initiatives and measures following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as country experience from the region. As the COVID-19 has mostly affected the sectors, where women are typically engaged and made the invisible role of care visible, it is crucial for the governments to better understand

and reflect the measures for a strong care sector in all areas of the recovery plan – both in the short and long term. The event will present key findings from the regional analysis on empowering women through reducing the unpaid care and investing in the care economy, which is developed jointly by UNECE and the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office of UN Women and is part of a UN Development Account project on the COVID-19 impact on women and the care economy.

## AGENDA

### OPENING REMARKS

**09:00 – 09:15** **Olga Algayerova**, *Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNECE Executive Secretary, UNECE*  
**Āsa Regnér**, *Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results, UN Women*  
**Gordana Gavrilović**, *Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Serbia*

### The care economy in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region and the COVID-19 impact on women: Challenges and opportunities

**09:15 – 10:25** **Moderator:** *Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia*  
**Keynote speaker:** *Silke Steinhilber, PhD, Independent Researcher on gender, social policies and sustainable development, Care economy and women's empowerment: Regional trends and policy initiatives*

#### Sharing country experiences:

**Elvira Surabaldieva**, *Member of the parliament; The parliamentary faction of the Social Democratic Party, Committee on Economic and Fiscal Policy, Kyrgyzstan*

**Liliana Palihovici**, *President of the "Institutum Virtutes Civilis" Public Association, Republic of Moldova*

**Professor Sara Cantillon**, *Director, Wise Centre for Economic Justice, GCU Glasgow School for Business and Society*

**Professor İpek İlkkaracan**, *Professor of Economics, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey*

**Dilek Cesur**, *Corporate Communications Director, Yeşim Textile, Turkey*

#### Key questions:

- How to reduce the care gap and ensure we do more for inclusive economic participation?
- What are three key actions to take to redistribute the unpaid care work in a short-term?
- What innovative solutions and practices we suggest to make care work count and paid?

### CLOSING REMARKS

**10:25 – 10:30** **Alia El-Yassir**, *Regional Director, UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia*

#### REGISTRATION [HERE](#) ▶

Advance registration for the RFSD is required. Following the registration, a personalised confirmation link will be sent.

Please join the session 15 minutes prior to the start with the link provided following registration.