

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION



Bridging the Digital Gender Divide for Women's Economic Empowerment

Side Event of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for UNECE Region 2025

Organized by the Permanent Mission of Armenia, Permanent Mission of Estonia, Permanent Mission of Slovenia, Permanent Mission of Spain and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Date: 02.04.2025 | 13:15 - 14:45

Venue: Room V (A building), Palais des Nations, Geneva

The 2025 UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) will focus on the theme 'Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind'. The Forum will take place ahead of the 2025 UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which this year will review the progress made towards the SDG 5 on gender equality. The UNECE

annual intergovernmental forum aims to assess progress and exchange knowledge, best practices, and policy solutions to support the 2030 Agenda, in line with regional priorities.

Gender equality and empowerment of women, in particular in the sphere of economy remains a global challenge in many countries, due to the gender digital divide persisting in women's and girl's access to and use of information and communication technologies. Lack of access to technology, low digital literacy and gender bias, constrain women to harness the power of digital tools and innovation. With the rise of digital technologies, new opportunities are emerging to bridge the gender gap and foster women's empowerment and full, equal and meaningful participation in sustainable development, including at the decision-making level. In this context, ICTs and innovation offer transformative potential, enabling women to gain better access to education, financial services and realize their economic rights.

As the Beijing+30 review and appraisal takes place this year, this event presents a valuable opportunity to contribute to it, and share experiences, expertise, and insights while fostering discussions on achievements and challenges in advancing gender equality and empowering women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

This event will contribute and be held within the framework of the celebrations of the [Girls in ICT Day](#), amplifying its impact by highlighting the importance of equal and equitable digital inclusion for young women and girls, and supporting the goal of accelerating global connectivity and ensuring women's full participation in the digital transformation process.

We hope to bring awareness on girls in STEM as a crucial movement, and aim to increase the participation, representation, empowerment and success of girls and women in this field. Historically, women have been underrepresented in these areas due to systemic barriers, stereotypes, and a lack of encouragement, and significant actions are needed to bridge this gap.

Insights and recommendations will also aim to inform how gender can be better integrated into future digital development strategies both within the UNECE region and globally, help advance the various SDGs, especially SDG 5 (gender equality), and contribute to SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure).

Guiding Questions:

- How can ICTs promote empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of their human rights with the view to achieving sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development?
- Can you provide us with some examples of good practices in helping reach gender equality in this field?

Meeting facilitators:

- **Ms. Valentina Stadnic**, Programme Officer, ITU Office for Europe
- **Ms. Andrea Matasova**, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe

Moderation and setting the context:

- **Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head, ITU Office for Europe
- **Ms. Carolyn Handschin**, President, NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva

Speakers:

- **Keynote: Ms. Belén Sanz Luque**, Regional Director, UN Women Europe and Central Asia
- **Ms. Natalia Mochu**, Regional Director, Regional Office for CIS, ITU
- **Mr. Davit Khachatryan**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia
- **H.E. Mr. Marcos Gómez Martínez**, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Spain to the UN in Geneva
- **Ms. Helena Valas**, Head, Department for equal opportunities, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia
- **Ms. Radka Sibille**, Digital Affairs Advisor, EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva
- **Ms. Lorraine McDowell**, President, Expanding Your Horizons Geneva
- **Dr. Anja Kranjc Horvat**, Educational researcher and project coordinator, EPFL