



ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS WOMEN IN SERBIA

**Association
of Business Women in Serbia
(ABW Serbia)**

**COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT
to the
UN Global Compact**

**Reporting period
2021 – 2023**

**Belgrade
September 2023**

Part I
STATEMENT OF CONTINUED SUPPORT TO UNGC

To UN Global Compact Board Members and our stakeholders,

I am pleased to confirm that the Association of Business Women in Serbia (ABW Serbia), registered in Serbia, reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact for the period 2021-2023. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for non-business organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,



President of ABW Serbia
Sanja Popovic-Pantic, PhD

Part II. Description of Actions

Women's Entrepreneurship. Vision. Mission. Objectives. Support. Networking. Promotion. Learning. Development. Public Advocacy.

The Association of Business Women in Serbia (ABW Serbia), a non-profit, non-political and no-governmental organization is the largest national organization of women entrepreneurs in Serbia. ABW Serbia has taken a leading role in empowering and uniting women in the business sphere, boasting a membership exceeding 900 individuals, with 300 belonging to the core group. These members encompass a diverse array of women, including micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise owners, executives from large corporations across various sectors, and women in managerial roles. Over the course of its 25-year history, ABW Serbia has remained dedicated to advancing gender equality, promoting female entrepreneurship, and enhancing the status of women in society. A strong, well-known and respected partner in public-private dialogue, actively contributing to both social and economic development, ABW Serbia stands leading organization in gathering women entrepreneurs, supporting them and promoting female entrepreneurship in Serbia.

The objectives of the Association are to increase the number of women who start their own business, raise awareness and strengthen the visibility of female entrepreneurs, encourage women, business owners to expand their business, create networks where female entrepreneurs will exchange ideas and establish new business contacts, strengthen the connections of women entrepreneurs at the local, regional and international level, influence the development of public policies which are favorable for SMEs, promote social responsibility and high standards of ethics in business, which the Association successfully implements through its projects and other activities.

All the goals outlined align seamlessly with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. During the reporting period, ABW Serbia was actively involved in a spectrum of national and local initiatives aimed at promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with a special emphasis on SDG 5. The organization provided valuable support to female entrepreneurs, SMEs, large women-led companies, as well as young girls and female students.

Each of the implemented projects and activities represents a step forward towards achieving gender equality, particularly in the economic sphere. Furthermore, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) defined by the UN Global Compact and the UN Women agency, which focus on advancing gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, stands as a vital pillar in the Association work. Principle 5, specifically related to enterprise development, supply chain management and marketing practices is of particular importance.

In addition to providing training, engaging in public advocacy with policy makers, and carrying out socially responsible and educational projects, the Association organizes mentoring programs for both members and non-members. It also facilitates regular meetings for its members through the ABW Business Women Club. The online International Business Women Club (e-IBWC) serves as another significant platform for interaction. ABW Serbia's comprehensive offerings encompass seminars, webinars, lectures and trainings, master classes, conferences, researches initiatives, networking

opportunities at the both regional and international levels, active participation in various events, conferences and B2B meetings, and promotion through its publications, media, social network channels, newsletters and catalogs. The Association's projects engage ABW members, potential entrepreneurs, women from marginalized communities, members of the Roma population, women aged 45 and above, women residing in rural areas, and primary school students participating in initiatives such as Girls in ICT Day.

ABW Serbia in Figures:

- Celebrating 25 years of existence since its establishment in 1998
- A membership base of 900 individuals throughout Serbia in collaboration with partner associations, including 300 core members,
- Close collaboration with 10 partner associations in Serbia, whose establishment ABW Serbia has supported and with whom it maintains close ties
- Successful realization of 165 projects
- Benefitting 7,800 women participants through ABW projects, educational programs, and training sessions.

Despite the challenges during the last years of the pandemic crisis, the Association has achieved noticeable results. It has actively organized and participated in numerous activities, projects, events and gatherings aimed at developing and promoting women's entrepreneurship. As in previous years, we have worked diligently to improve business conditions for small and medium enterprises through public advocacy. We have remained active in strengthening and expanding local, regional, and international cooperation, promoting and educating young women entrepreneurs and prospective entrepreneurs, and raising awareness about the significance of women's entrepreneurship.

Public Advocacy

During the reporting period, ABW Serbia actively engaged in public advocacy efforts. We communicated with governmental bodies and public institutions, conducting various capacity-building and awareness-raising activities with the aim of advocating for improvements in the business climate.

Projects

Over the past two years, ABW Serbia has undertaken several projects aimed at supporting and promoting women's entrepreneurship, as well as enhancing the employability of marginalized women in the labor market.

EDUCATE, EMPLOY AND ELIMINATE GENDER-BASED STEREOTYPES THROUGH TRAINING, AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS OF WOMEN (FOUR 'E')

This project focused on reducing gender stereotypes in both social and economic spheres and increasing the participation of women from vulnerable groups in the labor market. The project achieved its objectives through several means, including providing training on gender stereotypes, offering training on professions in the ICT sector and construction occupations, and conducting video promotions. Additionally, the project aimed to establish private-public partnerships with national and local institutions and representatives from the business sector. This project was supported by UN Women as part of the Key Steps towards Gender Equality II project, which is funded by the European Union. [READ MORE](#)



INTEGRATION OF ROMA WOMEN AND OTHER MARGINALIZED FEMALE GROUPS IN "NEW NORMAL" ON THE LABOR MARKET – NEW EMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVES II

Enhancement of livelihood opportunities for women of Roma nationality and local marginalized women groups is achieved through training programs in crafts, web design, internet tools, catering, sweets production, and the fundamentals of reflexology. This project received support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), as part of the "Migration for Development" program under the broader initiative "Returning to New Opportunities" by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). [READ MORE](#)

**EKONOMSKO OSNAŽIVANJE
RANJIVIH GRUPA ŽENA KROZ
OBUKE ZA ZANATE**

Немачка сарадња
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

giz
DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

UDRUŽENJE POSLOVNIH ŽENA SRBIJE

BELGRADE ENTREPRENEURIAL ICONS AND YOUNG TALENTS IN INNOVATIONS

As part of the Program to support the development and promotion of women's innovative entrepreneurship for 2022, initiated by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, this project involved various activities, including the organization of events such as Girls in ICT Day and Success Flower. These events featured a competition to recognize the best female entrepreneurs, mentoring sessions, film production, and the creation of a publication titled *Belgrade Winners of the Success Flower - Success through Innovation*. The primary aim of this initiative was to promote innovative business ventures led by women and to inspire young girls of an appropriate age for career orientation to embrace entrepreneurial spirit. [READ MORE](#)



ENHANCING CAPACITIES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FOR INTRODUCTION OF INNOVATIVE BUSINESS PROCESSES AND PROVISION OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF WEB SALES SHOP FOR REBRANDED TRADITIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS FROM SW SERBIA

Support for the competitiveness of female entrepreneurs was provided through training sessions for members of the Association of Business Women in Serbia. These sessions covered topics such as digital transformation, transitioning to a green economy, and the significance of standardization. Additionally, efforts have been made to introduce standardization criteria in ten companies. To foster the expansion of the women's market, particularly small-scale producers of traditional cuisine from the southwest of Serbia, the project focused on branding their products and creating new sales channels, including the development of online shops. This initiative was possible through support from the German organization GIZ as part of the Private Sector Development in Serbia (PSD) program. [READ MORE](#)

WINNOVATORS – BOOSTING ENTREPRENEURIAL AND STEM/STEAM CAPACITY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION, EU ERASMUS+

The European three-year project, funded under the Erasmus+ program, includes the Association of Business Women in Serbia as a partner within a consortium of

universities and organizations from several countries (Serbia, Estonia, Slovenia, Italia, Romania). The project's main goal is to collaboratively develop and implement innovative approaches to education with the aim of enhancing capacity building in the fields of digital technology, entrepreneurship, STEM/STEAM innovations, and sustainability. These efforts are specifically targeted towards young women in rural areas, female students attending institutions of higher education, and teachers. [READ MORE](#)

INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC ADVOCACY TO ENHANCE THEIR POSITION IN THE LABOR MARKET

This project was designed to provide support to marginalized women groups, helping them reintegrate into the labor market. We achieved this by collaborating with local governments to identify the most effective mechanisms. This involved gaining insights from employers who have successfully implemented best practices and understanding the specific challenges faced by these women. To facilitate this process, we organized roundtable discussions at local government offices and establish an e-Counseling center on the Association of Women in Serbia's website. The Open Society Foundations funded this project, which aimed to empower marginalized women and improve their opportunities in the labor market. [READ MORE](#)

Udruženje poslovnih žena Srbije
e-Savetodavni centar

Platforma e-Savetodavni centar nastala je u okviru projekta „Uključivanje marginalizovanih grupa žena u javno zagovaranje za poboljšanje njihovog položaja na tržištu rada“ (septembar 2021-april 2022), finansiranog od strane Fondacije za otvoreno društvo, sa idejom da se pomogne integracija ranjivih grupa žena kroz pružanje podrške lokalnim samoupravama u pronalaženju najboljih mehanizama za uključivanje ove kategorije žena u tržište rada. Javno zagovaranje za ekonomsko osnaživanje marginalizovanih grupa žena sprovedeno je organizovanjem okruglih stolova u Zrenjaninu, Čačku i Priboju. Predstavnici javnog, poslovnog i civilnog sektora razgovarali su tokom zajedničkih panel diskusija o konkretnim problemima ovih grupa žena, upoznavajući se i sa primerima dobre prakse poslodavaca na lokalni.

Kako bi se dodatno podržalo ekonomsko osnaživanje žena i poboljšao njihov položaj na tržištu rada, Udruženje poslovnih žena Srbije pokrenulo je e-Savetodavni centar namenjen svim zainteresovanim stranama:

1. ženama iz kategorije marginalizovanih grupa, teže zapošljivih, ili potencijalnim preduzeticama
2. predstavnicima lokalne samouprave
3. poslodavcima

Na pitanja koja postavljaju predstavnici ove tri zainteresovane strane, odgovaraju preduzetnice, članice UPŽ Srbije kompetentne za oblasti na koje se odnose postavljena pitanja. Sva pitanja i odgovori biće javno dostupni. Svi oni koji postavljaju pitanja obavezni su da uredništvu dostave svoje pune kontakt podatke (ime, prezime, status, organizaciju/instituciju, mesto), s tim da pitanje kada se postavi na sajt, može da bude potpisano inicijalima, samo uz navođenje mesta stanovanja, ili organizacije, ukoliko je u pitanju predstavnik lokalne samouprave ili poslodavac.

Teme

- Pravna klinika
- Klinika za rad i zapošljavanje
- Klinika za ljudske resurse
- Klinika za upravljanje menadžerima
- Kursovi i informacije
- Klinika za poslovne procese
- IT (informatička) klinika
- Klinika za psihosocijalnu podršku

PROMOTING THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE WOMEN'S ENTERPRISES RESILIENT – “FEMTECH” FOR RESILIENCE

This project was dedicated to supporting female entrepreneurs who are members of the Association of Business Women in Serbia, as well as women-led start-ups. Our primary objectives included raising awareness about the pivotal role of information and communication technology (ICT) and driving sustainability in female-led enterprises

during times of crisis. To achieve these goals, we were actively engaged in capacity building in the field of digital transformation. We employed various tools such as webinars, podcasts, mentoring sessions, and opportunities to present business ideas before business angels. This project received funding from CIPE – the Center for International Private Enterprise. Our aim was to empower women in entrepreneurship and contribute to the growth and resilience of female-led businesses in challenging economic circumstances [READ MORE](#)



LOOK UP TO ME! INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A WOMAN RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS.

Funded by the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio in Charge of Innovation and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, this project is designed to promote women entrepreneurs, who are also owners of SMEs and members of ABW Serbia. Project encompassed four key activities:

1. Podcasts: These involve interviews with prominent members of the Association.
2. Conversations with Success Flower award winners
3. Film production: The creation of a movie focused on innovative women's entrepreneurship.
4. Publication: The development of a publication highlighting the achievements and contributions of women in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through these activities, the project aimed to celebrate and support women entrepreneurs in their pursuit of innovation and success. [READ MORE](#)



Events

The most prominent annual event organized by ABW Serbia is *the Success Flower* ceremony, which encompasses the following awards:

1. Success Flower Award
2. Most Gender Sensitive Company Award
3. WIPO IP Enterprise Award

Another significant yearly occasion coordinated by ABW Serbia is the *International Girls in ICT Day*.

SUCCESS FLOWER

1. Success Flower Award

ABW Serbia is widely renowned for its *Success Flower Award*, a prestigious recognition honoring the best women entrepreneurs in Serbia. This event is a prominent fixture on the official agenda of SME Week, a celebration recognized by the European Union and observed in numerous countries.

We have been conferring this award for 17 years, during which time we have recognized and honored 161 remarkable women entrepreneurs with the Success Flower Award. These honorees have excelled in various categories, including:

Export-Oriented Company
Successful Business Model
Special Awards

2. Most Gender Sensitive Company Award

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) established by the UN Global Compact and UN Women serve as a fundamental framework for our work, with particular emphasis on Principle 5: *Implement enterprise development, supply chain, and marketing practices that empower women*. Involving women entrepreneurs in the value chains of large corporations necessitates collaboration with smaller women-owned businesses that often face challenges in becoming regular suppliers due to issues such as costly certifications, high volume requirements, extended payment terms, and similar barriers. As a result, smaller companies, where women predominantly hold ownership, still find themselves excluded from such partnerships. However, the process of recognizing the significance of this collaboration and bridging the corporate sector with the small business sector, particularly those led by women, in Serbia, is still evolving.

This is precisely why ABW Serbia, within the Success Flower event, introduced the *Most Gender Sensitive Company Award* six years ago, marking the first occurrence of such an recognition in our country. From the outset, the Honorary President of the commission responsible for bestowing this prestigious award has been the President of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia and the Deputy Prime Minister. This recognition is conferred upon large companies that exemplify the best practices in incorporating small and micro women-owned enterprises into their

value chains. They also demonstrate a commitment to socially responsible business practices, gender-neutral treatment of all employees, and a dedication to gender equality values. This recognition encourages these large companies to strengthen their ties with women-owned enterprises, offering them the necessary support and serving as an example for other firms to follow. To date, 26 companies and major corporations have been honored as the Most Gender Sensitive Company.

3. WIPO IP Enterprise Award

In 2022, as part of Success Flower, the *WIPO IP Enterprise Award* was initiated, under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organization and in cooperation with the Intellectual Property Office of the Republic of Serbia. The award is intended for women entrepreneurs who apply intellectual /industrial property protection in business, such as trademark, industrial design, geographical origin and the like. This award was established within the WIPO award program to inventors, authors and innovative companies around the world.

The Success Flower event is supported by many national and international organizations, governmental institutions, as well as by the Executive Agency for SMEs of European Commission. [SEE MORE](#) / [READ MORE](#) / [READ MORE](#) / [READ MORE](#)



INTERNATIONAL GIRLS IN ICT DAY

We are dedicated to nurturing the younger generations and encouraging girls to select their future professions without being constrained by preconceived notions. Our aim is to support them in breaking free from stereotypes and embracing career paths where women are underrepresented, particularly in fields like information and communication technologies (ICT).

In accordance with the initiative of the United Nations International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the world observes Girls in ICT Day every fourth Thursday in April. ABW Serbia has been celebrating this day for the past 13 years, involving 7th and 8th-grade elementary school students, with a highlight being the *Catch an Idea* competition organized for the past seven years to select the finest video works created by female

students. Over the years, approximately 10,000 girls have participated in this event. During this occasion, girls visit various companies and engage in discussions with women who serve as managers, owners, and co-owners of these businesses. The core concept behind our event is to motivate, empower, inspire, and provide opportunities for girls to explore diverse career options when making their future professional choices.

Over the last six years, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia has graciously served as the Honorary Patron of our event. In 2022, the final event took place at the Belgrade City Assembly Hall, and in 2023, it was held at the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. [READ MORE](#)



FREJA FORUM

Traditionally, ABW representatives have been actively participating in the international Freja Forum for over a decade. In 2021, the Freja Forum was held in November in a hybrid format, both online and offline, with ABW's delegation consisting of four representatives present in Brussels. The overarching themes of the conference in 2021 revolved around Democracy, Equal Opportunities, and Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2022, the international Freja Forum was held in Belgrade once again, marking its third occurrence. From November 11 to 13, 2022 around 50 representatives from diverse NGOs and institutions representing the Western Balkans region, Turkey, Sweden, and other EU countries attended two seminars and six workshops. As in previous years, the primary topics included Democracy and Equal Opportunities, with a notable focus on resilience – acquiring resilience for individuals, society, and other entities to address the crises that have impacted us over the past three years. [SEE MORE](#)

Networking

Members of the Association of Business Women in Serbia regularly participate in the Women's Business Club's monthly meetings. Additionally, they engage in networking activities with local, national, and international organizations, both through in-person

interactions and the e-IBWC platform. They have attended and actively taken part in numerous events, congresses, and conferences, within the country and abroad. Furthermore, they have participated in various online and offline international sector-specific B2B meetings facilitated by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), as well as events like the WEGATE summit and others. The Association is also an active member of the United Nations Global Compact.

Over the past two years, ABW Serbia has signed several memorandums of understanding with strategic partners. These partners include the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Help Serbia, Dress for Success Belgrade, the City of Zrenjanin, the Municipality of Priboj, Wood Planet Zrenjanin as a company/employer, and the Association of Women "Save the Village."

e-IBWC / e-International Business Women Club

In 2021 we established the International Business Women Club online with objective of connecting businesswomen from the diaspora and those who are not of our origin but are interested in forming business relationships with women entrepreneurs in our country, particularly our members. This network has already been established in several European countries, including Italy, Austria, Norway, Germany, Malta, and Cyprus. Furthermore, it has extended its reach to regions beyond Europe, such as the Middle East (UAE) and Australia. We are presently in the process of selecting women coordinators for additional European countries. The online format allows women entrepreneurs from various countries to come together and engage in networking activities with our members from Serbia. [READ MORE](#)

Media and Publications

The association maintains a consistent presence in the media, including both print and electronic platforms. Our members frequently participate in television shows, interviews, and actively advocate for and promote female entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, we routinely update the public about our activities through our website and various social media channels, such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Additionally, we regularly share videos and films on our YouTube channel.

In addition to the annual recordings of the Success Flower event, ABW Serbia has produced, recorded, and broadcasted several films and podcasts in both video and audio formats over the past two years. These multimedia initiatives are dedicated to promoting gender equality, fostering a positive business environment, celebrating female entrepreneurship, and featuring successful female entrepreneurs who serve as inspiring examples and role models for young or potential entrepreneurs. Here are the outcomes of ABW's video production efforts in the past two years:

1. Success Flower event [SEE MORE](#)
2. Videos Through training to work - Economic empowerment of vulnerable groups of women through craft trainings [SEE MORE](#)
3. Videos 4E - EDUCATE, EMPLOY and ELMINATE gender-based stereotypes through training, awareness campaign and building partnerships to ENHANCE the economic position of vulnerable groups of women [SEE MORE](#)

4. Film 4E - EDUCATE, EMPLOY and ELMINATE gender-based stereotypes through training, awareness campaign and building partnerships to ENHANCE the economic position of vulnerable groups of women [SEE MORE](#)
5. Film Belgrade Winners of the Success Flower - Success through innovation [SEE MORE](#)
6. Podcasts Look up to me! [SEE MORE](#)
7. Film Look up to me! [SEE MORE](#)

In 2021 and 2022, ABW Serbia issued 4 publications,

1. Success Flower 2022 (printed and online edition) [READ MORE](#)
2. Success Flower 2021 (printed and online edition) [READ MORE](#)
3. Belgrade Winners of the Success Flower - Success through innovation (printed and online edition) [READ MORE](#)
4. Innovation guide with examples of good practice in women's entrepreneurship (online edition) [READ MORE](#)

Association of Business Women in Serbia

Volgina 15 | 11060 Belgrade | Serbia

Tel +381 11 6776 801

www.poslovnezene.org.rs

office@poslovnezene.org.rs

www.youtube.com/upzsrbiye

www.instagram.com/upzsrbiye

www.facebook.com/UPZSrbije

www.linkedin.com/company/upzsrbiye