



In May-July 2017, the Gender Equality Unit of the Council of Europe carried out a series of eight pilot training seminars on women's access to justice across the Eastern Partnership countries. Implemented in the context of the Programmatic Cooperation Framework "Improving Women's Access to Justice in the Eastern Partnership Countries", the seminars were co-organised with national training institutions for judges and prosecutors in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine. A total of 300 participants including judges from appeals, criminal, and general jurisdiction courts, prosecutors specialising in violence against women cases, international and national experts, representatives Ministries of Justice, women's rights NGOs, and Council of Europe field offices, attended the pilot training seminars.

Recognising the significant challenges women face in accessing legal protection and remedies in Eastern Partnership countries regarding issues of discrimination, violence against women and domestic violence, insufficient protection in labour and family codes, the trainings presented an important opportunity to bring together judges and prosecutors from multiple regions of the respective countries. Participants included judges from appeals, criminal, and general jurisdiction courts, as well as prosecutors specialising in violence against women cases. To facilitate exchange of information, challenges and good practice from a variety of countries and systems, the project and the national partner institutions brought together international and national experts, representatives of the respective Ministries of Justice, women's rights NGOs, and representatives from the Council of Europe field offices.

The two-day long events allowed for the piloting of targeted training programmes applying the *Training Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women's Access to Justice*. Seeking to address barriers women face such as judicial gender stereotyping, legislative and procedural as well as socio-economic barriers, experts addressed issues of gender equality, access to justice, relevant Council of Europe and national standards and good practices, and ongoing national legislative changes. The role of judges and prosecutors in improving women's access to justice were also presented and discussed, including through practical issues of interaction with female witnesses and litigants and gender-sensitive courtroom management.

Results of the trainings include:

1. Strengthened capacity of judges and prosecutors to ensure a gender-responsive approach in their work in order to improve the access of justice for women experiencing human rights violations.
2. Increased knowledge of applicable Council of Europe standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights, case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, the European Social Charter revised and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), as well as universal standards such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
3. Developed targeted national training programme, material and resources on the basis of the *Training Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women's Access to Justice*, developed by the project and the training institutions.

Following these series of seminars, the *Training Manual for Judges and Prosecutors on Ensuring Women's Access to Justice* will be finalised and published by the end of 2017. The Council of Europe will continue supporting its member states in the implementation of further measures to ensure the equal access to justice of women.

The Pilot training seminars took place as follows:

- Academy of Justice of Armenia: 15-16 June 2017 and 17-18 June 2017
- Academy of Justice of Azerbaijan: 1-3 May 2017 and 29-30 May 2017
- Prosecutor's Office of Georgia: 18-19 May 2017
- National School of Judges of Ukraine: 26-27 June 2017
- National Academy of Prosecution of Ukraine: 1-2 July 2017

