

LAWGEM – DAY 2

July 1st 2022

FIRST SESSION:

ROUND TABLE IV – WOMEN ON THE FLEE – WOMEN AS REFUGEES

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Bojana Čučković

Professor Čučković opened the session by raising very important issues: Does international law provide special protection to female refugees and how much do we know about human rights of female refugees as well as the children? She mentioned the new input for an EU framework for a refugee protection as asylum, which is gender-based and also raised the question whether national public law and authorities provide sufficient protection. She then yield the floor to the first speaker Professor Dr. Thomas Giegerich.

Thomas Giegerich (online) – German jurist, professor of European Law, International Law, and Public Law at Saarland University, and Director of the Europa Institute, Saarbrücken. Professor Giegerich talked about international and EU Law and Gender Equality as well as the first chapter of the Textbook which is about human rights law from a gender perspective. He stressed the importance to introduce the gender equality and pay attention to it in international and supranational law. Regarding gender gap and progressive potential, he remarked that international and supranational (EU) laws have promoted the equality of women and non-binary persons. Professor Giegerich recalled that when talking about gender equality standards of international law and promotion of gender equality it started with the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the (Female) Citizen published in France in 1791. It stated that women, like their male counterparts, have natural, inalienable, and sacred rights. Those rights, as well as the related duties and responsibilities to society, are outlined in the remainder of the document.

The professor underlined the main and certain documents in International law which promote the rights of women and gender equality. He especially focused on: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1945) which underlines the dignity of women and persons, without distinction of sex. He also mentioned the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, International Convention on Economics, etc...

Professor Giegerich then drew attention to the CEDAW. It is first gender-specific human rights treaty – widely accepted. The professor pointed out to the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. The protocol provides broad protection for women's human rights, including their sexual

and reproductive rights. The significance and potential of the protocol go well beyond Africa. The treaty affirms reproductive choice and autonomy as key human rights and contains several global firsts. For example, it represents the first time that an international human rights instrument has explicitly articulated a woman's right to abortion when pregnancy results from sexual assault, rape, or incest; when a continuation of the pregnancy endangers the life or health of the pregnant woman; and in cases of grave fetal defects that are incompatible with life. Another first is the protocol's call for the prohibition of harmful practices such as female circumcision/female genital mutilation (FC/FGM), which have ravaged the lives of countless young women in Africa. The Professor stated that it is important to mention the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, Convention of "Belem do para" (Berlin, Paris) 1994 and also mentioned the Council of Europe – Istanbul Convention Against Violence against women and domestic violence, 2011; The Arab Charter on Human Rights (ACHR), which affirms the principles contained in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.

While talking about the supranational or EU Law, Professor Giegerich reminded that equality between women and men fundamental value of the EU and that the EU is charged with combatting specific gender gaps.

After Professor Giegerich another speaker joined online - **Rigmor Argren**, who is Senior Lecturer of *International Law*, Örebro, University of Sweden.

Professor Argren spoke about International humanitarian law from a gender perspective. Professor started with the Battle of Solferino – in 1859 when women did participate in the war, and went on to comment Geneva Convention (I to III) and how the people in war should be treated as well as Geneva Convention (IV) - relative to the Protection Civilian persons in times of war. Professor pointed out that women are mentioned in the biological aspect – protection from sexual abuse and all crimes that can be carried on against women. Another interesting issue was raised and that is the protection of the unborn child and small children. The women and men experience the conflict very differently – sexual violence against women is the main problem in a war situation (as the Ukrainian one is at the moment). Professor accentuated the reflection on war as hyper-masculine (soldier, violence of war, violence against women, internationality). Masculinity is constructed and defined socially, historically and politically, rather than being

biologically driven. It becomes obvious what is legal and what is real. Finally, Professor Argren concluded that it is possible to start to think about the international system outside the isolated gender perspective and to increase the participation of women because they were always seen as powerless and as victims, and yet they seek equality.

The word was given to the moderator of the session, Professor Dr. Ivana Krstić –Full-time Professor of International Human Rights Law and a Director of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law
-- ICR

Ivana Krstić spoke about the position of women as refugees in national and international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the key legal documents on refugees. The core principle is non-refoulement, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where their lives or freedom are seriously at risk. This is now considered a rule of customary international law. The states are expected to work with us to ensure refugee rights are respected and protected. The criteria provided by the definition of the word “refugee” in the 1951 Convention are important for the identification of women in need of international protection. Meanwhile, the Committee notes that regional refugee instruments and national laws have accepted and also expanded upon the definition given in the 1951 Convention to cover a range of persons in need of international protection for reasons of, variously, international or internal/non-international armed conflict and occupation, events seriously disturbing public order, serious human rights violations or generalized violence.

Ivana Krstić went on to say that according to the Istanbul Convention “gender-based violence against women” refers to violence directed against a woman based on her gender or that disproportionately affects a woman. She also mentioned CEDAW that compliments the refugee Convention as well as the community officers who deals with these issues which means that in practise a lot is overlooked. Professor Krstić noted that under article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees the reasons for persecution must be linked to one of the five grounds listed therein: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Gender-related persecution is absent from the text. National law does not recognize women as a special social group, based on sex - so there is a problem with women’s positions. There are five reasons why women cannot belong to a particular group, but gender is not one of them, hence it is very difficult for them to do so.

The current general recommendation aims to ensure that States parties take gender into account when interpreting all five grounds for granting refugee status under the 1951 Convention, consider gender when determining membership in a particular social group for that purpose, and further incorporate additional grounds for persecution—namely sex and/or gender—into national legislation and policies relating to refugees and asylum seekers. Ivana Krstić mentioned that individuals who are unable to return to their countries of origin due to, among other things, threats to their life, torture, or cruel or degrading treatment, are also granted refuge in various international, national, and regional contexts.

Further on, professor Krstić said that there are many reasons why women are compelled to leave their homes and seek asylum in other countries. Women experience rights violations throughout the cycle of displacement in addition to heightened or cumulative forms of discrimination against them that constitute to persecution. The Committee recognizes that displacement arising from armed conflict, gender-related persecution and other serious human rights violations that affect women compounds existing challenges to the abolition of discrimination against women. It also recognizes the persistence of other forms of exploitation with displacement, such as trafficking for purposes of sexual or labor exploitation, slavery and servitude. Professor underlined that state parties need to treat women with dignity and to respect, protect and fulfill their rights under the Convention at each stage of the displacement cycle, as well as in the enjoyment of durable solutions, including integration and/or resettlement in receiving States and/or voluntary repatriation to their State of origin. She added that persecution that targets a woman only for being a woman or that disproportionately harms women is referred to as gender-related persecution. The Committee observes that understanding how women's rights are violated is critical to the identification of those forms of persecution. The Committee notes that violence against women is a prohibited form of discrimination against women is one of the major forms of persecution experienced by women in the context of refugee status and asylum. Finally, Professor Krstić pointed that gender-related claims to asylum may intersect with other proscribed grounds of discrimination, including age, race, ethnicity/nationality, religion, health, class, caste, and another status. Even though gender is not specifically referenced in the definition of a refugee given in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it can influence or dictate the type of persecution or harm suffered by women and the reasons for such treatment. It must be emphasized that asylum procedures that do not take into account the special

situation or women' needs can impede a comprehensive determination of their claims. She concluded that it is necessary to implement a gender approach which will help to improve the status of refugees and to include gender-sensitive procedures.

After the presentation of Professor Krsić the floor was yielded to the online guest speaker **Dr. Sussane Strand**- Associate Professor of Criminology at CAPS – Center for Criminological and Psychosocial Research School of Law, Psychology and Social Work, Örebro University, Sweden Professor Strand talked about gender competent criminal law and specific laws treating domestic violence and stalking in Sweden. Professor Strand pointed out to the severity – there is more violence in rural areas which remains longer – sexual violence is bigger in rural than in urban areas. So, she continued, we as a society need to consider it to help and support the society to overcome those obstacles. She added that there is evidence that rates of intimate partner violence in rural communities are similar to or greater than those in urban communities, that women living in rural areas reported continuous and more severe IPV before obtaining a restraining order compared to women in urban areas and that rates of intimate partner homicide are higher in rural areas. She mentioned that stalking reported to the police had similar motives for reporting comparing a large and a small city in Italy. She went on to question what characterizes a stalker – they are extremely dangerous – they think they have right to stalk – they do not agree with the decisions the other partner has made and they think in a way that the stalker is the more important than the victim. The she continued to analyze the outcome of the Swedish law against stalking. She also said that there are questions that need to be addressed when working with stalking cases: the more severe stalking the more afraid are the victims; stalking might not be recognised until there is any kind of aggression or violence; negative coping strategies can be consequences of being stalked, which makes risk management more difficult. Several risk management strategies were initiated with a focus on the victim: contacting social services or a crime victim support centre, providing a victim advocate, initiating a restraining order, performing a security talk, providing a safety phone, or an alarm package, providing shelter. She also added that there are limitations for policing reacting to stalking in rural areas. She finished her presentation by mentioning the RISKSAM research program in Sweden – as a model used to prevent violence.

Ivana Marković – Assistant Professor, Criminal Law, Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade spoke about Female genital mutilation (FGM) as a form of persecution. On FGM in general, Ivana Markovic said that the victims are exclusively women. Focus is on all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the genitalia or the injury to the female genital organs for non-medical purposes. She added that

- 200 million women and girls alive have this problem
- 68 million girls and women mains to be cut, most of them before 15/16 years

Ivana Markovic underlined that the problem was that the number of cut women in Europe is growing. FGM/C constitutes persecution as it has been classed as a form of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, and as a violation of the human rights as well as health and bodily integrity of women and girls. It violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). It also violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which demands the ‘highest attainable standard of physical and mental health’ and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which asks to ‘protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse. To qualify for refugee status, a claimant must show that the persecution she fears is for the reason of her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group (PSG), or political opinion. Even though the most common Convention ground in connection with FGM/C claims is membership of a PSG, fear of FGM/C can be connected to all of these reasons. Since the definitions of race and nationality include ethnic group membership, it can be argued that persecution happens for reasons of belonging to an ethnic group affected by FGM/C. Where FGM/C is thought to be a religious requirement, or where the woman’s religion prohibits FGM/C, there is a nexus to the Convention ground religion. Further, opposition to FGM/C can constitute a political opinion. Since FGM/C is a practice that affects only women and since women experience discrimination in their countries of origin, with FGM/C being an ‘extreme expression of the discrimination’, they can be said to belong to the PSG “women.” This argument incorporates gender into the refugee definition.

Ivana Marković explained that a common reason for refusing an asylum claim based on FGM/C is to allege that it is within the power of the woman herself, or her parents, to refuse the act of FGM/C. In almost every society where it is practised, FGM/C is a rite of passage or initiation as girls enter womanhood and/or perceived as a religious duty; its persistence must be understood in

terms of societal pressures to conform and the consequences of failing to do so. It is often believed that an un-cut woman will not bear live or healthy children and is often 'required' if a girl is to be marriageable. Finally Ivana stressed that state protection, even if it exists it is not always available and gave the example of Kenya where state law is said to be against customary practices.

The following speaker was **Dr. Natalija Lukić** - Assistant Professor at Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, Professor of Criminology. Natalija Lukić spoke about gender perspective of victimization, crime and penal policy. She drew special emphasis on gender differences in commission of certain criminal offences and on the question whether men and women have different ways to get to crime. She said that according to research that was done in Serbia a few years ago, many women try to escape from domestic violence or forced marriages in the first place. She added that the number of those who reported trafficking and sexual exploitation, forced labor, and organ trade is was very small. Many of them had a negative experience - mostly they had threats to their lives, and were victims of rape or they were forced to work in jobs without or with limited protection of labor rights - as part of forced labor, poor working conditions, and non-payment and overtime work.

Prof. Dr. Marko Davinić, Full-time Professor of Public Law, University of Belgrade Faculty of Law continued the session with the presentation of the topic: Gender Sensitive Asylum Procedure. Professor Davinic underlined that asylum procedures of the signatory states should ensure that women are able to submit independent asylum claims and be heard separately, even if they are part of it families seeking asylum. Contracting States should accept that when the principal the applicant is recognized as a refugee, other family members would normally also be recognized as refugees ("derivative status"). Professor Davinić stated that it is necessary that women who are recognized as refugees, either in their own right or as a derivative issue individual documentation to status holders to prove their status, be protected from expulsion and secure related rights. In many communities, especially those with traditional views, there is a big barrier to realizing asylum rights, especially because of the situations that are happening. Mostly everything is based on individuality. First of all, it is important that the woman is interviewed away from the family, because there is certain information that she would not present in front of the family or it would be easier and faster for her to present it away from them, that is, if her family members are not present. Without hesitation, it is necessary to respect the protection and

credibility of the statements made. Professor Davinić reminded of the risks of secondary and tertiary victimization of women and that the relationship of trust should be built in the investigation process. He said that accelerated proceedings should be available in sensitive cases as well in gender-based which are very complex.

Professor Davinić's presentation was followed by a presentation given by **Prof. Dr. Tanasije Marković**, Full-time Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law who talked about Gender Sensitive Constitutional Law.

Professor Marinkovic said that it is important to understand what public law includes. Throughout history he pointed out that the public spheres were reserved for men, and patriarchal behavior and understanding of tradition lead to a better position and power for men not only in the private sphere and in families, but also the public sphere. The second period of the development of women's rights was a bit difficult for men, that's why seminars were organized that included men as well, to make them understand that women all want equal rights. Advanced Asian countries certainly think differently. He spoke about gender-sensitive public law and the differences that exist between men and women that used to belittle women and put them in the background - although this was completely unjustified. Professor Marinković went on to analyse political rights of women but through the gender perspective: women's right to education, and to participate in society in the same way as a man, as well as religious rights, freedoms, and gender equality. When it comes to freedom of religion and religious rights, Professor Tanasije analysed important European Court of Human Rights' decisions as well as decisions of the European Court of Justice. He also draw parallel with the national public laws and by-laws in France and decisions by the Conseil d'Etat regarding religious freedoms of women.

In the discussion that followed interesting questions were raised regarding the proper balance when it comes to freedom of religion and national security as well the issue of wearing burkas in the European states.

SECOND SESSION:

ROUND TABLE V – ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Moderator: Prof. Dr. Mirjana Radović, Professor of Company and Trade Law, University of Belgrade Faculty of Law and Dr. Mareike Fröhlich, Saarland University, Europa Institut

Economic empowerment of women

Professor Mirjana Radović introduced the topic Gender Economics – Integrating Gender Equality in Economics and Management: Opportunities and Challenges and announced **Professor Dr. Antonio Martuscelli** who spoke about Economic empowerment of women. Professor Martuscelli presented institutional aspect of income and researches about women wellbeing. The focus was of rationality of individual preferences. He explained the sources of gender inequality, female employment. Professor also presented unemployment range tables, gender pay gap-variations across countries and unequal access to assets, finance and technology as well as unequal access to financial market. He showed the numbers present in the Italy regarding gender inequality. Professor Martuscelli underlined obvious structural inequalities and paid special attention to lower incomes of women which create a risk of falling into poverty and social exclusion.

Dr. Mareike Fröhlich introduced **Nikola Ilic, Assistant Professor of Legal Economy at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law** who spoke about Gender Pay Gap. He started out his presentation with the question:” Why do women earn less than men?” and then went on to present main findings that he will continue to develop for his written contribution. Nikola went on to define the gender pay gap as a systemic difference of wages between men and women where he draw the attention to huge gender pay gap which present strong violation of legal norms and strong economic consequences . Professor Ilić presented thoroughly the current state of play in the EU and collected data from institutions. He also added where he found discriminatory elements but also explained different factors related to productivity. He explained that different countries have different approaches. He then concluded that in order to get the full picture it is important to include every factor in order to calculate unequal gender pay gap.

Professor Mirjana Radović announced the following speakers- professors of Company law at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Law- **Dr. Jelena Lepetic and Dr. Tatjana Jevremovic. Petrovic** Professor Jevremović Petrović talked about Economic empowerment of women and she thanked Merike Fröhlich who was the co-author in the written contribution for excellent cooperation. Professor Jevremović Petrović presented the EU Gender Equality Strategy done in 2020 which aims to create the equal position in society and economy and gender equal business environment. She added that according to the World Economic Forum Report in 2020 economic participation of women is regressing and that females are underrepresented in the labor market.

Professor showed statistical data, in the world and in Serbia regarding managerial positions, ownership status- overall low level of women participation in entrepreneurship. She stressed that it is important to identify the specific problems of women's entrepreneurship. One of the particular problem and obstacle in the women's entrepreneurship is access to funding and positions. Professor Jevremović Petrović explained that one part of the solution to the problem- is affirmative action: direct funding, incentives to entrepreneurship, education and removing stereotypes. She concluded that encouraging and connecting as well informing women on various forms of entrepreneurship and their education as well as networking and information regarding prospects is crucial.

Professor Jelena Lepetić continued to analyse this approach to the topic while presenting her contribution: Women in Corporate Boards. Professor Lepetić firstly thanked Professor Vujadinović as a member of the LAWGEM team but as a Vice-Dean for International Cooperation for the organization of this event marking that this Conference presents a great contribution for the Faculty of Law University in Belgrade.

Professor Lepetić introduced her topic by stating the reasons for fostering gender diversity in corporate boards and by exploring the rationale. She stated that there is not enough empirical data that support the gender diversity. Professor Lepetić shared the statistics where average share of women in boards in the EU increased from 8.5% to 32.3% . Best results are achieved in France and in Sweden. She also underlined that we should take into consideration the specificity of the director's position. In Serbia, the latest data of 2018 showed that the number is increasing from 2014. However, Professor Lepetić said that there are actions taken by the EU but no visible results. In addition she said that there are no rules harmonized in the EU regarding this matter. Professor Lepetić mentioned the 2012 Directive proposal where the idea is to have the quota of 40% of boards positions that would be held by women. She concluded by explaining the importance of the quota but also by explaining the difference and impact of mandatory and recommended quota.

Finally, **Professor Dr. Teresa Ponton Aricha** spoke about Gender Equitable Taxation together with **Professor Dr. Eleonor Kristifferson** who joined online. Professor Ponton Aricha explored the question whether the taxation is gender neutral. Taxation serves for citizens needs and provides economic incentives- it is essential to introduce gender perspective in taxation. Profssor Aricha also presented statistical data- especially in Spain where personal income with men is

significantly higher. She talked about Family unit- family based tax system, where taxation gives marital status relevance. Professor Ponton Aricha underlined that equality should be priority for the Government.

Professor Eleonor Kristofferson continued speaking about the abolishment of joint taxation of spouses in Sweden in 1970s: joint taxation of earned income was completely abolished in 1971 and joint taxation for wealth in 2007. She then presented the reforms such as parental leave, where men and women were allowed to share the parental leave. She then went on to analyze very interesting issue such as “Tampon tax”- reduced tax rate on feminine hygiene and gave example of Sweden. In her concluding analysis Professor Kristofferson said that the Swedish tax system does little for the gender equality and that the direct subsidies are more efficient than taking family circumstances.

Afterwards a very fruitful discussion was held where Professor Antonio Alvarez introduced arguments regarding systematic inequality and gender pattern and Assit. Nikola Ilić clarified the calculation of the gender pay gap and the factors that determine it. Mareike Frolich concluded the session that equality is necessary in every aspect touched upon during this session but that the welfare perspective should be also taken account.

THIRD SESSION:

ROUND TABLE VI – GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF PRIVATE LAW AND PUBLIC POLICIES (IN THE TIME OF CRISIS)

Moderators: Prof. Dr. Fuensanta Rabadan and Prof. Dr. Branko Radulović

Keynote speech was given by **Prof. Dr. Rosemary Hunter** and she talked about *The Reproduction of Gender Difference and Heteronormativity in Family Law*.

Prof. Hunter spoke about Family Law being the key site for the transmission of gender norms with regard to adult relationships and parenting children, and heteronormative expectations concerning the construction of families and family relationships. Two important concepts for this topic are gender difference and heteronormativity: they are intertwined and represent two sides of the same coin: gender difference is about the individual, and heteronormativity is about the relationship.

While heterosexual marriage is still widely accepted as a norm, there is an issue of recognising other modes of relationships, such as cohabiting and same-sex relationships, which are often differently regulated than heterosexual ones. Another important point is seeing the effects of such kind of recognition on heterosexual relationships. Additionally, there are types of relationships which are rarely tackled in law: caring, dependant, non-conjugal relationships (there are some examples of such kind of regulative in the world, but they are few and far between). When it comes to parenthood, the heterosexual model is again accepted as a norm. Prof. Hunter spoke about many issues which should be defined and regulated by law, such as assisted reproductive technologies and their accessibility, gendered ascription of parenthood ("mother" and "father" instead of "parent"), recognition of poly-parenting, transsexual individuals and parenthood etc. Another important topic is the role of gender in the division of marital property on divorce. Prof. Hunter mentioned some key issues such as gender division in intact familie and gendered advantages/disadvantages, if ignored on divorce (valuing only financial contribution to the marriage, insisting on equal division of property when it fails to account for unequal needs and capacities after divorce, impoverishment of divorced women and their children etc.). Finally, the topic of post-separation parenting was addressed: how the burden of shared care falls on mothers and children, how there are different normative expectations for mothers and fathers, recognition and regulation of gay, lesbian and transgender parenting.

In conclusion, Prof. Hunter stated that we see some changes over time, however they come very slowly. Family laws continue to attach meanings to gender, resulting in advantages and disadvantages, and continue to privilege some forms of relationships and marginalise others. After the Key-note speech of Prof. Hunter, **Dr. Fuensanta Rabadan and Dr. Letizia Coppo** presented their topic Gender Competent Family Law.

Prof. Rabadan briefly presented the topic which was addressed in her contribution to the textbook chapter: egalitarian and patriarchal modes of regulating parental responsibility, custody and child support. For the longest time, men had a hegemonic position both in private and public life, while women were subordinated. Through laws and conventions, father and mother were eventually given the same position and responsibility within the family, however certain stereotypes can still be noticed in practice: currently, the family has elements of both egalitarian and patriarchal family. In order to get rid of these stereotypes, many positive and inclusive actions have to be taken in law, education and economy. Prof. Rabadan then talked about the

issue of parental responsibility and custody, and how gender stereotypes play a big role in it, also about the "best minor interest" as a primary consideration when deciding about custody. Unfortunately, many judges still make decisions based on the existing gendered stereotypes (e.g., a father is not capable of taking care of a young child, or one of the parents is not suitable to parent due to their sexual orientation etc).

Touching upon another aspect of the legal approach to the gender equality- ***Gender Equality in Different Fields of Private Law***, Prof. Dr. Gabriele Carapezza Figlia in an online presentation talked about the importance of two principles for accessing the market freely, and those are freedom of contract and equality. Various market mechanisms may influence the freedom of contract and prevent the members of minority groups to access certain services and goods. Professor then talked about how the social position of the victim and some "factors of risk" such as gender and sexual orientation may be the ground for discrimination on the market (refusing to do business or sign a contract, charging a higher price etc.) He further elaborated on the importance of suppressing discrimination on the market, which should be achieved not only through laws but primarily through the laws of competition. Last but not least, he discussed national and European legislation – how it set the legal framework for fighting discrimination on the market (right to not be discriminated against; the principle of non-discrimination penetrating the private law – the law of contracts), and also the case law in the courts of the EU.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Snežana Dabić and Assist. Prof. Dr. Katarina Dolović treated the topic Covid 19 and contract relations – gender perspective.

The main question in their research was: who was affected more in contract relations due to Covid 19 – men or women?

The studies have shown that women were hit harder, and the reasons for that were multiple. Due to social distancing and other Covid 19 government measures, many jobs were closed, and most of them were in the female dominated sectors (tourism, entertainment, education, hospitality, beauty industry etc). Additionally, Covid 19 increased the need for child care, as many kindergartens and schools were closed (approximately 1,5 billion children and students were out of school due to the pandemic). At the same time, it became exponentially harder to find babysitters because of the social distancing measures and increased babysitting rates. This situation was particularly hard on the single parents who are in general more often women. Even though the pandemic increased the hours men spent at home, it did so for women

as well who spent even more time on housework. Also, as healthcare is a female dominated sphere, women were more prone to getting infected.

So women were either losing their jobs, or quitting staying home and taking care of children. In other words, their working contracts ceased to exist due to Covid-19 and its consequences.

In the second part of their presentation, the authors focused on the legal consequences of Covid 19 and its effect on the contractual law. More precisely, they focused on the legal mechanisms which were at the disposal of the contractual parties when they were unable to fulfill their contractual obligations: the impossibility doctrine and termination or revision of the contract due to changed circumstances.

Afterwards, **Prof. Dr. Ljubinka Kovačević** talked about **Gender equality in the world of work in the conditions of multiple crisis.**

According to Professor Kovačević, one of the basic aims of Labor Law is to protect the weaker party of the employment relationship and to secure decent working conditions. One of the ways to do so is by implementing gender equality. Prof. Kovačević reflected briefly on the history of position of women on the labor market (gender division of labor in family reflected on the labor market; marriage and motherhood often prevented women from finding employment because it was either difficult to do so or forbidden by law). Even when the principle of gender equality was introduced, many problems remained unresolved as women still openly faced difficulties with finding jobs, keeping them and advancing, which could be explained by negative stereotypes and prejudice the employers have when considering to employ women, and discrimination in education which leads to occupational segregation. Prof. Kovačević further elaborated why the trend of flexibilization labor laws is dangerous for women and leads to worsening of their position on the labor market, and also how technological development affects jobs by causing redundancy. Finally, prof. Kovačević also mentioned other troubling issues, such as position of migrant women and their influence on labor law (female migrant workers) and underrepresentation of women in trade unions, especially in their decision making bodies.

Finally within the topic **Public Policies on Gender Equality**, **Prof. Dr. Branko Radulović** presented the topic **Gender sensitive public policies.**

Prof. Radulović started by saying that the term gender mainstreaming might be a better option instead of public policies on gender equality. He proceeded to explain how to incorporate

gender equality perspective into all policies, at all levels and stages, by the actors usually involved in adopting policy measures. There are four pillars of gender sensitive public policies: institutions, public policy documents, GE tools, and regulatory framework. Prof. Radulović then explained each one of them in detail.

The key Serbian institutions are Coordination Body for Gender Equality (CBGE) and Ministry of human and minority rights and social dialogue (Sector for GE), and also Public Policy Secretariat as a regulatory watchdog was mentioned. As for the Public Policy documents, the new GE 2030 Strategy was mentioned and explained. Legislative framework could be categorized into two groups: laws and regulations which are directly related to issues of gender equality and competencies of institutions related to gender equality at different levels of government, and laws and regulations related to various aspects relevant to gender equality an empowerment of women and girls. Finally, there were mentions of various LGE tools, gender budgeting, quotas, gender equality impact assessment, and GEI test implementation in Serbia.

As a final speaker, Prof. Dr. Mirjana Drenovak talked about Environmental crisis and gender issues.

Prof. Drenovak explained the connection between environmental crisis and gender issues. According to UN women, climate related extreme events can impact directly women and girls as they pose a threat to ways of life, livelihoods, health, safety and security for women and girls around the world. This is the exact reason why there should be increased women participation in climate decision-making, and why women should become agents of change instead of being seen solely as a vulnerable group. One step towards achieving that is having a gender sensible framework both at international and national levels, and pushing towards sustainable development and green recovery (particularly now in the wake of Covid 19 pandemic). Prof. Drenovak additionally explained the connection between climatory crisis, economic tensions, and their impact on women.

The Conference was closed with final remarks by participants and with finally address by Professor Dr. Vujadinović who thanked once again all the participants and everyone who contributed by moderating, presented during the Conference and wrote for the Textbook. She announced more activities for the LAWGEM project and wished everyone a pleasant stay in Belgrade.