



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND GENDER

Regional Advocacy Report

for

Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

International Gender Policy Network

November 2008

Development Cooperation and Gender. Regional Advocacy Report for Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

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CONTENTS

Glossary of Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
Commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	6
1. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the EC Development Cooperation with Central Asia	7
1.1 Review of the Gender Aspect of the RSP for Central Asia	7
1.2 Summary of the Dialogue with the EC Delegations	7
1.3 Country Reports	8
1.3.1 Kazakhstan	8
1.3.2 Tajikistan	9
1.3.3 Uzbekistan	10
1.4 Recommendations for Central Asia	11
2. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EC Development Cooperation with Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Caucasus	13
2.1 Review of the Gender Aspect of the CSPs	13
2.2 Summary of the Dialogue with the EC Delegations	14
2.3 Country Reports	14
2.3.1 Armenia	14
2.3.2 Azerbaijan	15
2.3.3 Georgia	16
2.3.4 Moldova	17
2.3.5 Russia	19
2.3.6 Ukraine	19
2.4 Recommendations for Eastern and Southeastern Europe and Caucasus	21
3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EC's Pre-accession Assistance	22
3.1 Review of the Gender Aspect of the MIPDs	22
3.2 Summary of the Dialogue with the EC Delegations	22
3.3 Country Reports	23
3.3.1 Albania	23
3.3.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina	24
3.3.3 Kosovo	25
3.3.4 Macedonia	26
3.3.5 Montenegro	27
3.3.6 Serbia	28
3.4 Recommendations for Countries under Pre-accession Assistance	29
4. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the ODA of EU Member States	31
4.1 General Introduction	31
4.2 Country Reports	31
4.2.1 Bulgaria	31
4.2.2 Czech Republic	32
4.2.3 Estonia	33
4.2.4 Hungary	34
4.2.5 Lithuania	35
4.2.6 Romania	36
4.2.7 Slovakia	37
4.3. Recommendations for the EU Member States	38
Concluding Remarks	40
Bibliography	41
About IGPN	43

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AP	Accession Partnership
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation
CBSS	Country-based support scheme
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
DG RELEX	Directorate-General for External Relations
EAR	European Agency for Reconstruction
EC	European Commission
ECD	European Commission Delegation
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument
EU	European Union
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
IBPP	Institution Building and Partnership Program
IDC	International Development Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIPD	Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document
NGDO	Non-governmental Development Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RSP	Regional Strategy Paper
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment have come to be understood as crucial prerequisites to development, and have been included among the ambitious Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations, which were signed by 189 governments in 2000. These commitments have been declared to reduce the significant gender imbalance in the developing world and to encourage the political and socioeconomic empowerment of women. As the world's largest donor, the European Union (EU) is considered to be the leading force in fulfilling these pledges. As stated in the "2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men", "Gender equality is a goal in itself, a human right and contributes to reducing poverty. The EU is a key player in international development efforts and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Development Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). It has reaffirmed **gender equality as one of the five key principles of the development policy in the European Consensus on development.**"¹ Although the EU's different levels of commitment provide aid recipient countries with opportunities to address gender inequalities on their domestic soil, **challenges remain to bring these commitments into effect.**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) across Europe have been drawing attention to the existing gap between policy and practice: **an overview of the European Commission's annual work, legislative programmes and policy strategy documents reveals a limited integration of gender concerns.**² Furthermore, the participation of civil society organizations and mainly women's groups in policy discussion and formulation lacks a clear structure, despite the obligation of EU institutions to support a political dialogue with them.³ In the same way the report of UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) "Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality" demonstrates with the example of Ukraine that when it comes to translating gender equality into the development of all programs and projects, challenges remain with regards to the capacity of staff, and the extent to which the EC engages civil society and women's organizations in developing its programmes and country strategies.⁴ In addition, the civil society organizations have emphasized that **individual governments are failing to deliver on their promises.** According to the Concord report of 2008, the situation is more critical in new EU Member States where the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment is "a secondary element for the moment" (Romania) or "non-existent in the development aid agenda" (Latvia).⁵

As an active promoter of gender equality and women's empowerment, the **International Gender Policy Network (IGPN)** intends to engage in a dialogue with both national and European administrations in the countries of Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. In the recipient countries particularly, the IGPN has been consulting the European Commission Delegations (ECDs) in the matter of the upcoming revision of the country and regional strategy documents (Country Strategy Papers, Regional Strategy Papers, Multi-annual Indicative Planning Documents). The IGPN has taken the opportunity of the midterm-review and the annual review of the country/regional strategy documents to **highlight the weaknesses of development cooperation and pre-**

¹ A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, *European Community*, (COM 2006) 92 final, p. 9, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0092:FIN:EN:PDF>

² Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 10, <http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

³ For more information see Chapter 2 in Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007

⁴ Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality: Global Findings and Key Messages, *UNIFEM*, 2008, p. 20, http://www.gendermatters.eu/resources_documents/UserFiles/File/Resource/Report_Global_web.pdf

⁵ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 15, <http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

accession assistance in terms of gender concerns, and to advocate for improvements. As for the donor countries represented by some of the new EU Member States, IGPN seeks to advocate for a more effective approach towards gender equality in their bilateral ODA (Official Development Assistance). Within the framework of this advocacy activity, IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries linked with IGPN, and one common Regional Advocacy Card and finally, this particular, more in depth Regional Advocacy Report. **The aim of this advocacy work is to remind the European and national representatives of their policy commitments.**

The report is divided into four main parts in accordance with the particular region (Central Asia) or country categories in terms of relations with the EU (partner country, potential candidate or candidate country, member state). The report begins with a brief overview of key gender equality documents which are politically and legally binding to the EU. The first main part presents the gender aspect of the EC's development cooperation with Central Asia, examines the Regional Strategy Paper and proposes recommendations to the actors involved to various degrees in the preparation of the strategy document: EU officials, national governments and civil society organizations. In the same manner, the second part scrutinizes the Country Strategy Papers for countries of Eastern, Southeastern Europe and Caucasus. The third part of this work pays attention to the EU potential candidate and candidate countries, suggesting improvements in terms of including gender equality and women's empowerment in all of the programming processes. The fourth part critically portrays to what extent gender concerns are addressed in the ODA of the new EU Member States. Recommendations are not made for each country individually but for each of the four groups of countries, as countries in one category have generally showed similar deficiencies in term of gender issues.

Although the majority of the report is focused on women and their empowerment, it is essential to point out that men are not neglected intentionally; however, the research as well as the existing development projects in this field are largely limited to women, despite the need to include men as well. This problem is particularly highlighted in the examples of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Finally, it is necessary to mention that the report has been prepared in a relatively short period of time and thus, not all aspects related to the subject could be expanded on, especially taking into consideration the number of countries the report encompasses.

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ **A commitment to gender equality is reflected in a number of politically and legally binding documents** of the EU and EC (Treaty of Amsterdam, Maastricht Treaty, Charter for Fundamental Rights of the EU, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals).
- ❖ The promotion of gender equality outside the EU is outlined as the number 6 priority area of the **2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** (Commissions' Communication). This priority is further detailed as follows: 6.1 Enforcement of EU legislation in acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries and 6.2 Promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), external and development policies. The key actions taken by the Commission will include monitoring and promoting gender mainstreaming and specific measures in the ENP, EU external relations and development policies, at policy dialogue and programming levels (Regional/Country Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers); at implementation level, particular attention will be devoted to gender mainstreaming in the new aid modalities (budget support and sector programmes).
- ❖ In terms of the EU development cooperation policy, the crucial policy framework for promoting gender equality is the European Consensus on Development, agreed upon in 2005 by the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament, and the representatives of the member states, where gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting issue.⁶ Furthermore, the **2007 Commission Communication on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation"** is the first step towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality and empowering women through development cooperation.⁷
- ❖ Related to the 2007 Commission Communication is the document "Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States", also known as the **Council Conclusion**. One of the conclusions is the following: "The Council recognizes the Commission's and the Member States' specific responsibility to support developing country partners in eliminating discrimination and gender inequality by increasing visibility and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and to promote and engage in an enhanced political dialogue at all levels, including the highest political level, which incorporates gender equality explicitly as a central theme."⁸
- ❖ In line with these documents, the EU has supported a **twin-track approach: gender mainstreaming** (mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of development policy) and **specific measures** aimed at socioeconomic and political empowerment of women.

⁶ EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality, *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting with the Council on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, *Council of the European Union*, 15 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09561.en07.pdf>

1. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE EC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH CENTRAL ASIA

1.1 REVIEW OF THE GENDER ASPECT OF THE RSP FOR CENTRAL ASIA

The Regional Strategy Paper (RSP) is the **EC's main programming tool** which sets policy objectives and priorities of the EC's assistance to a particular region over a given period of time. The RSP for the countries of Central Asia (in this report represented by Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) covers financial assistance on both a regional level, and for each country individually, for the period of 2007-2013.⁹ The RSP consists of five main sections: EC cooperation objectives; the partner countries' national policy agenda; an assessment of the political, economic and social situation of each country; an overview of past and ongoing EC cooperation; and the EC response strategy.

The Central Asia strategy has been developed in consultation with the authorities of the partner countries of the region, and the Member States and other donors have been consulted during the drafting process.¹⁰ **The EC Delegations in partner countries are responsible for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of development programmes at country level and for organising a dialogue with civil society organizations.**¹¹ In relation to gender issues, each delegation has a Gender Focal Point and assistance is also available from the gender desks in Brussels.

The RSP mentions gender in one instance in Chapter 5: "Gender issues and environmental concerns as important cross-cutting issues for the region will be integrated, as far as possible into the design of programmes relating to all the key issues outlined above, notably in poverty reduction and educational /capacity building programmes."¹² **Several references to gender are made indirectly with regards to poverty reduction in line with the MDGs.** Furthermore, the Country Analysis of the RSP mentions that agriculture (which is Tajikistan's most important employment sector), particularly the cotton sector, is characterized by child labour and unpaid women labour.¹³ Moreover, the Country Analysis makes a remark about gender equality as being among the government's priorities for achieving the goals of poverty reduction and MDG indicators. Nevertheless, in a 61-page-long document, these are the only gender-related statements.

1.2 SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EC DELEGATIONS

In August 2008, IGPN made inquiries to the **EC Delegations in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, to the Europa House in Uzbekistan**, and to the officials in Brussels, concerning the review of the RSP. No answer was received from the Europa House in Uzbekistan. According to the Delegation to Kazakhstan, the mid-term review of the Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia will follow the established procedures; however, **at this point and time the Delegation is not in the position to provide more detailed information** since the revision process has no fixed schedule yet. Nonetheless, the **Delegation stresses that gender equality is high on the EU's assistance strategy**, adding that within the last couple of years, at least 8

⁹ Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia for the period 2007-2013, *European Community*, p. 3, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/central_asia/rsp/07_13_en.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 70, <http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

¹² Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia for the period 2007-2013, *European Community*, p. 31, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/central_asia/rsp/07_13_en.pdf

¹³ Ibid., p. 50

women's projects were financed and at least in 6 more projects gender issues were mainstreamed.

The EC Delegation to Tajikistan replied that there will be an identification mission in October 2008 for drafting the 2009-2010 National Indicative Programme for Tajikistan. The Delegation stresses that no agenda has been fixed, so it is too early to say if gender equality will be specifically taken into account in the exercise. According to the Delegation, consultation with CSOs, including women's rights organisations, took place earlier on this year, during the programming exercise for the country-based support scheme (CBSS) for 2009 and 2010 of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) thematic line. The Delegation is aware of the EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation. The Delegation applies gender mainstreaming in its programmes, e.g. poverty alleviation projects implemented by NGOs support community-based organizations - these must be composed of 50% women. Furthermore, the EIDHR programme funds local NGOs, including women's rights organizations, which implement projects dealing inter alia with girls' access to education, preventing domestic violence, preventing human trafficking, and women's political representation.

1.3 COUNTRY REPORTS

1.3.1 KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan's transition period since its independence in 1991 has been accompanied by difficulties in the realms of politics, economy and social services. Despite the steady economic growth since 1999, Kazakhstan remains a low income country, where women are especially vulnerable to poverty due to the patriarchal traditions of the Kazakh society. Women face discrimination in the labour market, earn less money and are responsible for the households and child care; other problems include low maternal health, domestic violence, low representation of women in politics, etc. In terms of gender relations, there is a rather strong resistance among men to the changing role of women in society. Both men and women have experienced psychological stress from the rapid social and economic changes: with their self-definition as breadwinner undermined by unemployment and the loss of economic security, men have tended to become abusive toward themselves, through excessive alcohol use, and their families, especially in the form of domestic violence; women have become discouraged and depressed as their time becomes stretched and their professional skills undermined by low wages and layoffs.¹⁴ To a certain degree, gender concerns have been addressed by the Kazakh government and by international donors, including the EU.

In 1998, the National Commission on Women and Family Affairs was established by the Kazakh president Nazarbayev, followed by the creation of a National Action Plan to improve the status of women. Furthermore, there is a parliamentary group called Otbasy responsible for pushing for issues concerning family, women, health and vulnerable groups, and for drafting gender-related laws.¹⁵ However, observers say that commitment of the government is more theoretical than practical. Commenting on the slow progress regarding the improvement of the status of women, the government refers to the "lack of understanding of the nature and importance of gender issues among the general public."¹⁶ According to a report from the Swedish agency SIDA, the implementation of the laws is limited in many

¹⁴ Country Gender Assessment: Kazakhstan, *Asian Development Bank*, p. 10, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Country-Gender-Assessments/cga-kaz.pdf>

¹⁵ Gender Projects in Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Ukraine, *SIDA*, 2005, p. 56,

¹⁶ MDGs in Kazakhstan, *UNDP Report*, 2005, http://www.undp.kz/library_of_publications/files/1570-43657.pdf

cases by the lack of a mechanism to implement it – for example the laws have been passed by the governments but the district courts are not adequately informed as to how to put them into practice.¹⁷ Swedish organizations have, along with other international donors, helped to address gender equality in their development cooperation with Kazakhstan.

The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has its regional office directly in Kazakhstan and supports gender issues in Kazakhstan through various projects. The EC Delegation in Kazakhstan functions as the central office for the region of Central Asia, working closely also with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In 2007, the EC financed the following gender-related projects: Creation of the City Net of NPO for Work with Senior Citizens, Amplification of the Struggle against the Trafficking of People in the Frontier Areas of the Almaty Area, Formation of a Female Rural Network of the Frontier Areas of the Almaty Area for the Protection of Human Rights, Women in Prisons, Strengthening Civil Society through Gender Policy Integration in Rural Cross-border and Conflict Prone Areas. In total, gender-focused projects consisted of 19.11 % of the total EC support in 2007. As for the EC projects, at the moment, there is no further information accessible to examine the impact of the projects in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment.

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1.3.2 TAJIKISTAN

Although Tajikistan has been an independent state since 1991, political and economic transition is still an ongoing process. For the majority of the population, the transition period has meant poverty, vulnerability and serious social problems. Following the civil war in the 1990s, an overwhelming part of the population found itself below the poverty line, and among the most effected have been women.

Many women became widows, having on hands 5 and more children which is an average parameter for Tajikistan. Women's work load has increased as they have tried to support their families in the difficult economic times, having both a paid job and unpaid home duties. In a conventional Tajik society, there is an unequal distribution of home duties between man and woman and gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination remain also in the work place. In Tajikistan, gender relations have been influenced by traditional pre-Soviet stereotypes, some of them having roots in ethnic or religious patriarchal customs, such as polygamy or violent marriages. In order to improve the situation, some steps have been taken by the Tajik administration and assistance is also coming from international donors.

In the Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, gender equality is recognized as a priority task. Tajikistan has undertaken the obligations concerning gender equality at the UN's Fourth World Conference on the women's issues in Peking (1995) as well. With the purpose of increasing women's status, the National Action Plan for Increasing the Female Status and Role 1998 – 2005 was adopted in 1998. In 2001, the document Main Directions of the State Policy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001 – 2010, was approved by the government. This means that a certain legal framework for gender equality has already been created in Tajikistan. As for outside assistance, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) has for example since 2005 helped to train more than 200 civil servants throughout the country to implement gender equality policies, and in order to increase the capacity of women's NGOs, the OSCE sponsored a forum on the role of Tajik women in development issues, and supported a group of NGO experts in preparing

¹⁷ Gender Projects in Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Ukraine, *SIDA*, 2005, p. 56

the first shadow report on the implementation of the UN CEDAW.¹⁸ The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has operated in Tajikistan, and support for gender-related projects has been coming from the US AID (i.e. in the field of microfinances) or through the Women's Program of the Open Society Institute, among others.

Gender-based projects have also been realized with the financial assistance of the EU. Since 2006, the EC has funded two 24-months projects in Tajikistan: Access of Women to Information, and the Establishment of the Collective Potential for Family Violence Resistance; in 2005, a 12-month project Organizing Women's Support Services was launched aiming to raise public awareness, particularly the awareness of women to the violation of their rights, the public nature of domestic violence, and violence against women in the family in the remote districts.¹⁹ Among other EU financed activities are ongoing projects focused on human trafficking or the education of girls.

Yet, gender inequality is strongly embedded in all aspects of social, political and economic life in Tajikistan. Tajik NGOs advocate for the strengthening of the efforts, saying that more finances should be going to similar projects, most importantly to cover the different regions of the country. The recent report of the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) "A Gender Analysis of EU Development Instruments and Policies in Tajikistan" concludes that while gender equality is one of the five common principles of EU development cooperation, it is clear that resources allocated to specific gender actions are negligible compared to other issues.²⁰ On the basis of a brief assessment of current programs financed by the EU, the NEWW report assumes that only a small part of EU funds is allocated to solving specific women's needs, and even this small part is allocated within the frame of certain development programs (for example, TACIS, ECHO, etc.), and most development programs are implemented mainly through governmental structures and decisions on resources allocation are usually made by men.²¹

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1.3.3 UZBEKISTAN

Certain traditional practices exist in Uzbekistan that are discriminatory in character, humiliating women's dignity and bodily integrity, e.g. virginity control of brides, arranged and early marriages, control over reproduction, polygamy, etc. The problem is not recognized by the Uzbek state despite it having signed CEDAW. These traditional practices are being actively revived under the official slogan of reviving the national values which seemed to have been lost during the Soviet period. The mass media are spreading traditional stereotypes of the role of women in the family and society. The state doesn't address these issues, neither explicitly nor implicitly.

The problem of domestic violence is also not recognized by the state. The topic is a strict taboo and never discussed publicly. The current legislation does not admit violence against women. Still the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan (the official state machinery to improve the status of women in the country) started to work on establishing "centres for women's adaptation" with functions similar to those of crisis centres (the term "crisis centre", as well as "domestic violence", "gender" and "discrimination" are also strictly taboo). Currently, these newly established centres of social adaptation have no budget provisions

¹⁸ Gender Awareness, *OSCE*, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/13489.html>

¹⁹ Report of the European Commission, p. 308

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/eidhr/documents/full_report_thematic_en.pdf

²⁰ A Gender Analysis of EU Development Instruments and Policies in Tajikistan, EU Gender Watch, *NEWW*, 2007, p. 25 http://www.ngonet.dk/Files/Filer/KN/Ressourcer/EU_GenderWatch_Tajikistan.pdf

²¹ Ibid.

from the state, thus their sustainability is hanging by a thread. The major gender-based violations /women's rights issues are:

- Neo-patriarchy: traditional values continue to dominate in regulating everyday norms and rules which prescribe the subordinate status of women and determination of her main role as biological mother, housewife, unpaid domestic worker and caregiver.
- The re-Islamization of society, which has been accompanied by a resurgence of traditional patriarchal behaviors and norms.
- Extremely restricted possibilities for social grass root activism: since 2004, the major challenges for civil society activism have been the lack of opportunity and freedom for self-expression and criticism, lack of state funding, and administrative and legal obstacles to access foreign aid.

In 2004, two projects were supported for women's economic empowerment and raising the status of women with disabilities through the Business Women's Association of Uzbekistan and the Association of People with Disabilities through the Institution Building and Partnership Program (IBPP). The current IBPP program sectors as mentioned in the Call for Proposals (announced in summer 2008), however, does not mention or prioritize gender and women's issues.

The EC is donating €3.5 million euros aimed at supporting maternal and newborn care in Uzbekistan. The program will be implemented in cooperation with UNICEF. According to the press release on the launch of the program, it mainly addresses the medical aspects of maternal and newborn care, but fails to challenge the gender and social aspects of maternal and child mortality, anemia, malnutrition, the prenatal preference of gender (males) of unborn children and violence against women, including domestic violence.

1.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTRAL ASIA

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To integrate gender issues in all stages of country programming and project cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation)
- To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the RSP
- To strengthen human resources of Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, to encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To push the national governments to address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- Specifically concerning Uzbekistan:
 - To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the RSP, including poverty reduction, civil society promotion, education, water management and supply, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) support and promotion
 - To address other gender-related issues, most importantly the gender aspects of labor migration, the rights of women-migrants, the human rights of wives and children of labor migrants

Recommendations to the National Governments:

- To deliver on their promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations and their initiatives aimed at addressing women's issues
- To give special attention to the rural areas of the country

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances among women's organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegation/Europa House
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments
- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- Specifically to the Uzbek CSOs:
 - To lobby the national administration for the adoption of the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities, the inclusion of amendments to the legal codes of Uzbekistan for the purpose of introducing the terms "gender-based discrimination" and "domestic violence"
 - To lobby the national government to challenge resolution #56 and the recent decree on the new parliamentary commission on the funding regulations of the CSO (this resolution prohibits acceptance of any foreign aid received from a donor outside the country and in fact gives no access to aid from donors inside the country)

2. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE EC DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION WITH EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS

2.1 REVIEW OF THE GENDER ASPECT OF THE CSPs

The Country Strategy Paper (CSP) is the **EC's main programming tool** which sets the policy objectives and priorities of the EC's assistance to a particular partner country (in this report represented by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine) over a given period of time. The CSPs consist of five main sections: EC cooperation objectives; the partner country's national policy agenda; assessment of the political, economic and social situation; assessment of past and ongoing EC cooperation; and the EC response strategy. Gender equality issues should be reflected in each section of the CSP.²²

The CSPs are drafted on the basis of a dialogue between the EC Delegation and Brussels, the Member States' embassies, government ministries and civil society in the country.²³ In relation to gender issues, each delegation has a **Gender Focal Point**, and assistance is also available from the **gender desks in Brussels**. Furthermore, there are various **gender mainstreaming tools** available to the European officials, such as **Gender guidelines for Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and the Mid-Term Review of CSPs**. The Mid-Term Review process presents an important opportunity to address the mainstreaming of gender equality in the 'first generation' of CSPs and to examine the adequacy of the treatment of gender issues section by section, as indicated in the EC's Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation.²⁴

Although the individual **CSPs²⁵ mention gender equality as a cross-cutting issue**, taken as a whole, **the documents are fairly blind to gender concerns**. References to gender are made indirectly, usually with regards to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs, and gender indicators are provided only exceptionally. The CSPs usually fail to highlight gender issues with regards to employment, health issues, rural development, etc. Only brief remarks are made to the serious problem of trafficking in human beings. In contrast to gender, a lot of space in the CSPs is given to the environment which, in the EU's development policy, is also considered a cross-cutting issue. This may indicate that the preparation of the CSPs was done without the involvement of a gender specialist and/or any women's NGOs.

Concerning particularly the **Russian Federation**, the CSP is designed in view of the **EU-Russia strategic partnership** which is based on the four '**common spaces**': a Common Economic Space; a Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice; a Space of co-operation in the field of External Security; and a Common Space for Research and Education, which included Cultural Aspects. Overall, the CSP for Russia pays minor attention to gender, giving the impression that its objectives are based on pragmatic cooperation, especially in the field of economy and security. Concerns about gender equality seem like something to be dealt with on a national level.

²² Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation, *European Commission*, 2005, p. 34 http://www.iav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit_on_mainstreaming_gender_equality.pdf

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 39

²⁵ The individual CSPs can be downloaded at: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/sp/index.htm

2.2 SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EC DELEGATIONS²⁶

In August 2008, IGPN made inquiries to the **EC Delegations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine** and to the desk officers in Brussels concerning the Mid-term Review of the CSPs; however, no concrete information was provided either by the Delegation or the DG RELEX. Generally speaking, the **EC officials have responded emphatically that the EC has strongly committed itself to promoting gender equality and women's rights in all its actions**, adding that cooperation with NGOs and CSOs is very important to them and any suggestions by IGPN would be welcome. In addition, in the case of Azerbaijan, the officials of the Delegation replied that unfortunately, as the Delegation in Azerbaijan has just recently been opened, there is no staff member in place yet to follow gender issues, and they are thus unable to reply to IGPN's specific questions.

Moreover, IGPN has been informed that the EC Delegation in Moscow cannot give answers to any consultations relating to the preparation of the CSP because the CSP and Multi-annual Indicative Programmes are prepared in their headquarters, and the Delegation only plays a supporting role in the process of its drafting/revision. However, this argument goes against the official procedures which describe the drafting process of the CSPs.²⁷

It appears that **gender issues are followed more intensively by the Delegation to Georgia**. The officials emphasized that the Delegation to Georgia communicates with the civil society and also actively participates in the donor's coordination meeting on gender issues. Furthermore, the Delegation supports a number of projects under thematic programmes with a focus on gender issues, such as a 2 year project on "Prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence among internally displaced persons and refugee group in Georgia" which started in January 2008. The Delegation provided the IGPN representative with a list of EC financed ongoing projects with a gender component (supported under the special thematic budget line: "Civil Society"). Review of the list shows that some of the projects are directly addressing gender issues, such as gender-based violence, and promotion of women's rights. In addition, the Delegation says that the projects' monitoring has been implemented in accordance with the "Toolkit on mainstreaming gender equality in EC development cooperation", which is distributed to all Project Managers (and not only to the Gender Focal Point at the EC Delegation). Besides that, according to internal regulations, evaluation of the effectiveness of projects with a budget of less than 200 000 Euros is the responsibility of Project Managers (EC Delegation staff members), while the projects with larger budgets are evaluated by an external evaluator.

2.3 COUNTRY REPORTS

2.3.1 ARMENIA

Since independence in 1991, Armenia has experienced increases in poverty levels and troubling declines in human development as a result of both the economic transition and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.²⁸ Furthermore, the transition has seen increasing gender disparities in employment, and steadily falling fertility rates combined with a high abortion rate and large scale male migration have also led to troubling demographic changes.²⁹

²⁶ Information in this section has been obtained through email communication of IGPN with the EC Delegation and desk officers in Brussels

²⁷ See the Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation, *European Commission*, 2005, p. 34, http://www.iiav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit_on_mainstreaming_gender_equality.pdf

²⁸ Armenia Gender Profile, *The World Bank*, 2000, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECAREGTOPGENDER/Countries/20577395/ArmeniaGenderProfile.pdf>

²⁹ Ibid.

In recent years, some progress has been achieved in the realm of gender, with some support coming from the government as well as from international assistance.

Armenia has developed a Gender Policy Strategy, a law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities, and a law on Domestic Violence. The first two are supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and the UNDP (United Nations Development Program). A prominent women's NGO, the Armenian Association of Women with Higher Education, has been involved as a key player in developing the strategy and the law. Another local women's organization, the Women's Rights Centre, is leading a Working Group established in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, RA Police, Ministry of Health, and others, to develop the law on Domestic Violence.

Gender issues had been incorporated in the new sustainable social development strategy adopted by Armenia, and for the first time, the government's Action Plan for 2008-2012 includes gender equality as a priority direction. The Action Plan encompasses issues of domestic violence prevention and assistance provision for the victims of violence and their family members. The 2009 state budget envisages 16 mil. drams (about 52,000 USD) for services, intended for the victims of violence. A gender component has also been made a part of the revised PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper).

Concerning gender issues in the EC's development cooperation with Armenia, the key players in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment in the NGO world have no information on the EC Delegation's commitments to gender, their current and future program plans and the mechanisms of project funding and implementation. This fact is rather surprising, considering that Armenia's gender experts come from the NGO sector which actively collaborates with relevant government and state bodies and international organizations. The absence of public awareness of EC projects in Armenia allows women's NGOs to say that even if such projects exist, they cannot be considered sufficient and efficient. On the other hand, women's NGOs recognize the need of nationwide programs at the governmental level that would ensure sustainability, higher effectiveness of efforts, and the engagement of all layers of society into the projects.

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2.3.2 AZERBAIJAN

In 1991, Azerbaijan gained independence from the dissolved Soviet Union, and since then has been coping with the process of economic, political, and social transition. Gender equality and women's rights have continued to gain in importance throughout Azerbaijan. Both the state and the civil society in Azerbaijan recognize that gender equality is an important pre-condition for further development.³⁰ However, despite the equality of men and women declared in the Constitution and other legal documents, including the recent Law on Gender Equality, there is still considerable gender inequality in many spheres of social life, politics and the economy.³¹

For fundamental changes and the achievement of gender equality, complex changes on policy level and strong control mechanisms over policy implementation are necessary. For example, although a draft law on domestic violence was presented to parliament nearly two years ago, the law has not been adopted. Problems with the law on domestic violence have been criticized in the progress assessment by the EC. Besides the law on domestic violence, amendments to other laws which affect women's rights are essential. For example, due to

³⁰ For more information see Azerbaijan Human Development Report: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and challenges, UNDP, 2007, <http://www.un-az.org/doc/nhdr2007gendereng.pdf>

³¹ Azerbaijan Human Development Report: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and challenges, UNDP, 2007, p. 84, <http://www.un-az.org/doc/nhdr2007gendereng.pdf>

early marriages, young girls, who get divorced from their husbands, most of the time remain without financial support, as they lose everything in the divorce.

Concerning the institutional level, in 2000 the President issued a Decree on the State Women's Policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan and at the same time, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the National Action Plan on Women's Issues (2000-2005) and ordered the selection of gender focal points in all government institutions to bear the responsibility of promoting gender equality.³² Furthermore, there is a State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs in Azerbaijan, but as it is clear from its title, it doesn't specifically deal with gender issues. There is not a specific state entity that deals with the promotion of gender equality and women's rights in Azerbaijan. Women's rights NGOs are much more active in this regard. There are approximately 30 more or less active women NGOs. However, the lack of financial resources and the increasing number of NGOs makes competition among women's rights NGOs high.

Since 2007, preparation works have been launched for the establishment of a special Council under the President of Azerbaijan with the purpose of supporting NGOs. The budget of the government support is 1.5 million AZN for 2008. This move has had an impact on international donors' interest in funding the projects in Azerbaijan. Yet, there is a belief among the civil society organizations that although quite a number of NGOs received grants from the first round of the call for proposals from the NGO Government Support Council under the President, its work will lack transparency and fairness. Furthermore, among the NGOs that received this funding, there are very few organizations that specifically work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Since the beginning of 2008, the European Commission announced several calls for proposals among NGOs on different issues. It is of high importance that the EC allocate some of its budget specifically to gender issues in countries like Azerbaijan, where women's rights are violated widely. It is crucial to have gender equality not only as a cross-cutting issue, but also to take specific measures with the aim of women's empowerment.

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2.3.3 GEORGIA

In 2006, Georgia adopted the State Concept for Gender Equality which is a political statement of will that introduces definitions for gender, gender equality, direct and indirect discrimination, gender mainstreaming and other important terms based on CEDAW, and outlines the major directions of work as well as identifies priorities for the state's intervention in political, economic, and social fields. The next step should be the development of an Equal Treatment Law.

In terms of implementation of gender justice, complications exist due to the existing estrangement between NGOs and government sectors and the centralization of the political power. Furthermore, while human rights, women's rights, equality and justice are declared to be protected under national legislation, the work of the women's NGO community has to be also supported by a clear public request on gender justice. However, against the background of the almost total pauperization of the population, in its extreme business in surviving, women's rights and gender equality are probably the last issues the population makes a demand on.

The roots of women's problems and obstacles to the implementation of women's rights and gender justice lie in the feminization of poverty, as the process of democratization is not accompanied by economic development and women are among the most vulnerable

³² Azerbaijan Human Development Report: Gender Attitudes in Azerbaijan: Trends and challenges, UNDP, 2007, p. 18, <http://www.un-az.org/doc/nhdr2007gendereng.pdf>

groups. There is evidence of the necessity of turning civil society efforts into parallel work in both the economic strengthening of rurally-based women and their empowerment for social responsibilities and leadership. In many respects, this situation has been dictated by the abolishment of the local village councils by the Georgian government in October 2006, which, through direct electing by villagers/local communities, had made women's representations in village councils much higher than in the upper stages of political power. This step back from a democratic development was followed by the evident centralization of the political power in the country.

While women's problems are most acute in rural areas, rural women, as was years ago, are still isolated from public life, and can not participate in a women's movement, which is needed for strengthening it and thus creating a considerable social movement. The activities of a women's movement should be based on the public understanding of gender equality as being of national importance. While responding to gender injustice, the women's movement should be recognized as a benefactor of the whole population.

To conclude, general problems associated with gender issues in Georgia are the following: the lack of realization of international treaties on women's rights and gender justice, the lack of political will for gender justice implementation, extremely low level of women's political participation on all levels, and the low level of interactions between the state institutions and civil society organizations.

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2.3.3 MOLDOVA

Assuring gender equality and equal chances for men and women has become an ardent political, cultural, civic and scientific issue over the last decade. That is despite the fact that the main social institutions and socialization agents, such as the family, school, mass-media, etc. have continued to promote patriarchal values. Despite important changes, nevertheless, gender and women's issues are still neglected in Moldova and although women have obtained de jure equal rights and equal status with men, they are still discriminated against in many areas of life.

The Republic of Moldova has accomplished the first phase in ensuring equal opportunities for women and men. In the last two years Moldovan authorities adopted the equal opportunities law and a national plan for promoting gender equality for the period of 2006-2009. Nevertheless, the monitoring process of the implementation of the law and the plan for the period February 2006– February 2007 realised by Gender-Centru demonstrate that in some chapters the Law has formal and declarative characteristics and fails to take into consideration a mechanism for implementation. Also, the law is not an integrative part of public policies nor of the strategic documents of country development. Gender mainstreaming did not become an integrative part of the educational system; gender education of the young generation is not institutionalized, and is missing in the preparation system of teachers and other specialists.

The National Plan „Promoting the gender equality in the society for 2006-2009” contains 20 specific objects, and for 19 of them, partners for implementation are mentioned NGOs. Even though the representatives of the most visible and active related NGOs are usually invited to participate in the activities, planning meetings and discussions, most of the times, however, an authentic collaboration cannot be established.

Concerning the legal framework, equality under the law is anchored in the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. An Anti-Trafficking Law, which began to be enforced in 2005, criminalized the trafficking of persons, the majority of victims being women. At the same time its implementation and the implementation of the National Action Plan is mainly supported by NGOs and the international organizations. In September 2008, the Law on Preventing and

Combating Violence in the Family came into force. The law defines the types of violence: violence in the family, psychological violence, sexual violence, spiritual violence, economic violence, and moral and material prejudices. Furthermore, the law proposes the creation of rehabilitation centres for victims and aggressors where the person will receive shelet, juridical, social, psychological and medical assistance and protection.

The change of the cabinet of ministers in March 2008 led to an enlarged number of women at a decisional level, including the fact that the new Prime Minister is a woman. However, this doesn't mean that they are gender sensitive and will protect and promote women's rights and interests.

Furthermore, the judicial system lacks gender sensitivity. In accordance with the CEDAW Assessment Tool Report for Moldova, the enforcement of judicial decisions is critical for any government based on the rule of law. The lack of such enforcement remains a major obstacle in the protection of human rights in Moldova. The generalized problem, coupled with a lack of gender sensitivity within the courts and among law enforcement authorities, results in the denial of women's access to justice in numerous way and exacerbates existing human rights violations. This is particularly true in cases concerning violence against women.

Within the framework of the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child exists a directive responsible for equal opportunities and preventing violence. This shows the commitment of the Ministry and of the Government to promote and protect women rights; however, there are missing clear and reliable mechanisms for the implementation of the proposed objectives. Moreover, progress towards gender equality seems to have encountered a number of impediments. The main problems are: the used definition of gender equality is often a very narrow part of *de jure* equality; protection against discrimination is not always provided; women are expected to address these issues outside the "mainstream" of society; the position of women in decision-making is still very weak; and the methods used to promote gender equality have been mostly concerned with the specific needs of women and have not used the "gender perspective".

Concerning the involvement of the civil society, although there are a large number of NGOs working in different areas (over two thousands), only a few of them specifically target women's and/or gender issues and are actively involved in the women's movement. However, the challenging objectives concerning the advancement of women and gender equality can only be achieved through the joint efforts of the Government and civil society, particularly, the NGOs. Women's NGOs in Moldova have a crucial role in designing and implementing projects, which support and promote women's rights and empowerment, and address gaps in women's access to information resources.

The Moldovan legislation guarantees equal economic, political, and social rights for women and men. Even though in Moldova, like in other countries from the former Soviet space, which are in a too long transitional period to democracy, many legislative acts have been adjusted to international standards, legislation and enforcement mechanisms are inadequate in ensuring *de facto* gender equality and women's rights. While gender equality is mentioned in many legal acts (e.g. Education Law, Social-Political Parties' Law, Labour Code, Family Code, Salary Code, Citizenship Law), there are a lot of incongruities in many of them. Unfortunately, gender inequality persists in all areas of public and private life. In addition, there are no articles in the Criminal Code, which directly address the situation of sexual harassment. All this shows the progress made in the field of the Moldovan legislation in favour of the advancement of gender equality and protection of women. Nevertheless, there is still a need to fight against the mentality, attitudes and behaviour encouraging manifestations of gender discrimination.

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2.3.5 RUSSIA

Since 1990, about 3 thousand women's NGOs have opened in the country, and most of them have continued to operate until today. Over the past decade, much has been done by women's NGOs in Russia: violence against women has become a public issue, crisis centers have appeared in some of the country's regions, issues related to the trafficking of women are now being addressed and dealt with at the legislative level, and gender studies are becoming an inherent part of college and university curriculums" However, still not enough has been done to influence the traditional gender stereotypes in Russian society. The Russian Federation is slowly developing its own donor base; nevertheless, foreign donors still play a crucial role in supporting the civil society in Russia, particularly in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment projects.

According to the analysis of the Institute for Social and Gender Policy, between 2004 – 2005, only an average of 0.53% of funds invested by both Russian and foreign donors was spent on women's/ gender projects. Notably, foreign donors spent 0.48% of their total funding on such projects, whereas Russian donors spent as little as 0.05%. This study also revealed that such a theme as human rights appears to be one of the most unpopular among Russian donors, and the most unpopular subject is women's rights and gender equality (the latter includes trafficking in women, violence, and increasing the rights and capabilities of women). Both these subjects are supported only by foreign donors within the framework of both governmental programs and mixed funds. The most popular subjects of Russian donors are problems with children (both orphans and gifted children) and senior citizens, safety nets for disadvantaged groups, and the development of sport. In other words, these projects are aimed at decreasing the consequences and implications of social problems, and not at eradicating the roots of these problems.

In Russia, approximately 99% of gender-related projects have been supported by foreign donors, among the most important ones being the Open Society Institute's Women's Network Program and the Institute for Social and Gender Policy, the Ford Foundation, the J. and K. MacArthur Foundation, USAID, the Canadian Gender Equality Fund, and others.³³ During the last three years the situation with gender issues has really been dropped from the scenario in Russia development, as gender has been largely taken only as a cross-cutting issue, without further specific measures which would address women's issues.

With regards to gender concerns, many problematic aspects exist in Russia; however, mainly just the issues of violence against women and trafficking of women come under public scrutiny. The violation of women's human rights requires more attention especially among the following categories of women: migrant women; disabled women; HIV-positive women; women from rural areas; women with babies and infants; women engaged in the informal sector; working women; and women engaged in politics.

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2.3.6 UKRAINE

Ukraine has experienced a serious decline in the first decade of its independence. Only since the early 2000s has Ukraine's economy begun to recover. This difficult transition period has had an impact on gender relations in the traditionally patriarchal Ukrainian society, where men are the breadwinners and women take care of the household and children. Traditional gender roles have been undermined by a wide-scale male underemployment and unemployment, affecting the structure of authority and leading to a decline in marriages and fertility rates, and increasing numbers of female-headed households and children living in

³³ This indicator is for years 2004-2005

single-parent families.³⁴ The inability to live up to role expectations appears related to sharp increases in alcoholism, suicide and mortality rates among men, as well as increased levels of domestic violence.³⁵ Furthermore, for women, gender-based job discrimination, loss of state support for child care, poor maternal health, limited political representation, gender-based violence and a dramatic increase in prostitution and trafficking have also emerged as serious issues.³⁶ All these gender concerns remain serious issues to be tackled in Ukraine. The EU has committed itself to address gender problems in its development cooperation with Ukraine, and as this brief overview demonstrates, much more effort is needed.

Firstly, as the following citation reveals, the EU is aware of a deficiency with regards to gender and development. As stated in the report of the programme 'EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace', the Country Strategy Paper 2007-2013 and the National Indicative Programme 2007-2010 for Ukraine include gender as cross-cutting issues, which means it should be integrated into the development of all programmes and projects; however, challenges remain with regards to the capacity of staff to translate these commitments into reality, and the extent to which the EC engages civil society and women's organizations in developing its programmes and country strategies.³⁷

Regarding EC supported projects, during the past four years, there were some projects which specifically concerned gender issues. Among them were "Social nursing and consulting of HIV infected mothers, children with HIV status and children born from HIV infected mothers" (realized by NGO Society of Assistance to HIV infected, Konstantinovka), "Protected maternity as a guarantee of a healthy nation" (realized by NGO Mothers' School, Rivne), "East West Empowerment Disabled Women Advocacy Leadership Programme" (realized by Human Rights Foundation, Kyiv), "Study and Incorporation of International Human Rights Standards for Solving Domestic Violence Problems in Ukraine" (realized by West Ukrainian Centre Women's Perspectives, Lviv). Yet, gender organizations emphasize that the majority of the supported projects, although devoted to women's issues, were with few exceptions (among them Women's Perspective) led by NGOs which do not specialize in women's empowerment and women's rights. Overall, the projects were socially-oriented and supported the traditional roles of women rather than having an impact on policy change in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment (again with the exception of a few projects).

Generally speaking, the work of gender NGOs is affected by various problems when it comes to EC assistance. NGOs in the regions often lack access to information about EC assistance in Ukraine, about new calls for proposals, etc. There should be new strategies developed for that. Furthermore, women's NGOs lack enough experience and expertise to compete with other NGOs in calls for proposals. In addition, these NGOs are often in a much more vulnerable situation in the competition when gender is not a specific priority. Gender is only a cross-cutting issue in the calls for proposals and not a specific priority; in relation to that, previous experience shows that it is difficult to achieve policy change on gender issues if there are no gender-oriented projects. Moreover, there is no gender disaggregated data on the projects and, consequently, it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness and their gender sensitivity. Frequently, the projects with a women's focus are purely social projects with no emphasis on strengthening civil society and policy change. The EC office in Kyiv emphasizes, though, that this should be addressed by applicants, not by them in the calls for proposals. In addition, there are not many possibilities for regional NGOs to benefit from the

³⁴ Ukraine Gender Review, *World Bank*, 2002, p. 5

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECAREGTOPGENDER/Resources/UkraineCGA.pdf>

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ukraine Gender Review, *World Bank*, 2002, p. 5,

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECAREGTOPGENDER/Resources/UkraineCGA.pdf>

³⁷ For more information see Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality, Global Findings and Key Messages, EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality and Development for Peace, *UNIFEM*, p. 20, http://www.gendermatters.eu/resources_documents/UserFiles/File/Resource/Report_Global_web.pdf

projects or bring their experience and ideas to it; to improve this situation, special advisory councils and working groups are needed.

According to the Delegation to Ukraine, a new project is being developed, devoted specifically to gender issues (with a budget of 14 mil. Euros). This complex project will focus on a systematic change in 3 areas: elimination of the discrimination of women in the labour market, integration of gender issues in secondary education; prevention of violence, legislative changes, promotion of the visibility of gender issues and elimination of gender stereotypes in the mass media. In reference to this new project of the ECD, it can be concluded that there seems to be hope that more attention to gender equality and women's empowerment will be given in the EU assistance to Ukraine. As this brief overview demonstrates, there are a number of gender concerns which should be addressed in the future.

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2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE AND CAUCASUS

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To integrate gender issues into all stages of country programming and project cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation)
- To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the CSPs
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity (Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points)
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries
- To push the national governments to address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice

Recommendations to the National Governments:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations in rural areas
- To strengthen the dialogue with the civil society, including women's organizations
- To organize widespread public awareness campaigns to ensure public demands gender equality justice

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances among women's organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their advocacy and lobbying activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegations
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments
- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- To advocate for the inclusion of projects that specifically target gender issues, apart from having it as a cross-cutting issue
- To raise public awareness of gender equality and keep the public up-to-date concerning the developments in this field (to serve as a link between the government, EU and the general public)

3. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE EC'S PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE

3.1 REVIEW OF THE GENDER ASPECT OF THE MIPDS

The aim of the EU's overall assistance to a potential candidate country (in this report represented by **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia**) and a candidate country (in this report represented by **Macedonia**) is to support the country's progress towards reaching the Copenhagen accession criteria and to prepare the country for possible future EU membership. For candidate or potential candidate countries, EC's programmes and financial assistance are formulated in the Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).³⁸ The EC's strategic planning document under the IPA is the **Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD)**. Another important document is the Accession Partnership (AP) with an annual report called Progress Report, which monitors and assesses achievements of the country during the year.

The strategic areas of the MIPD are covered by five components: Transition Assistance and Institution Building, Cross-border Cooperation, Regional Development, Human Resources Development, and Rural Development. **Gender equality is considered a horizontal issue in the strategy documents.** Potential candidate countries receive assistance only through components I and II of the IPA. The MIPD is issued for a three year rolling period and is reviewed on an annual basis.

The MIPDs mention gender equality as a crosscutting issue. For example the MIPD for Montenegro says that "Equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be respected as regards gender as well as minorities at the programming and implementation stage, particularly in relation to socio-economic support programmes."³⁹ Nevertheless, even though gender equality is introduced as a cross-cutting issue in the documents, **there are many instances when gender questions could be further elaborated and incorporated into the main priorities.**

The annual Progress Reports give greater attention to gender equality, highlighting the achievements and deficiencies in this area. In the case of Albania for instance, the report states: "Albania is progressively approximating its legislation on working conditions and equal opportunities to European standards as regards gender equality. However, the State Committee on Equal Opportunities remains weak and the Gender Equality Act remains largely unimplemented. Further action is needed to facilitate women inclusion in the labour market and their participation in the decision-making process. Albania remains at an early stage in mainstreaming gender in employment as well as in other policies."⁴⁰

3.2 SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE WITH THE EC DELEGATIONS

In August 2008, IGPN contacted the Delegations in **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EC Liaison Office in Kosovo** regarding the matter of the **review of the MIPDs**; however, no concrete information was provided either by the Delegations/Liaison Office or desk officers in Brussels. The DG Enlargement emphasized that gender is a cross-cutting theme in the MIPDs and **all activities financed from the IPA programme will be assessed on their gender impact.** In some cases, the officials

³⁸ In January 2007, IPA replaced a series of EU programmes and financial instruments for candidate countries or potential candidate countries, namely PHARE, PHARE CBC, ISPA, SAPARD, CARDS and the financial instrument for Turkey

³⁹ Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document 2007–2009 for Montenegro, *European Commission*, 2007, p. 8, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/mipd_montenegro_2007_2009_en.pdf

⁴⁰ Albania 2007 Progress Report, *European Commission*, 2007, p. 33, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/albania_progress_reports_en.pdf

stressed that gender equality is not only a cross-cutting issue in the programs for Albania, but there are also specific projects in the area of gender and women's empowerment: for example, a call for proposals on "Women rights" in Albania was published only recently on the EuropeAid website. In addition, European officials usually mentioned that specific projects on the subject are foreseen in the coming years under IPA, adding that there are regular consultations with CSOs, including with women's rights organizations; however, for the time being, there is no detailed schedule when the consultations will take place, but the EC Delegations will make sure that the consultations will take place in a transparent manner.

3.3 COUNTRY REPORTS

3.3.1 ALBANIA

In Albania, gender inequalities still persist as women face discrimination in all economic, political and social areas. Gender stereotypes and traditional mentalities preserve the structural inequalities between women and men and unequal power relations between them. Most of the projects aimed to tackle these inequalities have been initiated by civil society organizations, in particular women's organizations. They have been mainly supported by international donors and international organizations, and in general, they have addressed the issue of low participation of women in decision-making levels, domestic violence, trafficking of women and girls, etc. However, there is a noticeable lack of coordination of all efforts; there is a tendency to implement short-term projects which sometimes overlap and fail to bring sustainability.

Concerning the legal and institutional framework, a radical change in the recent Albanian context is the approval of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Against Domestic Violence, 2007-2010. In addition to that, an Action Plan has been developed. The approval of this strategy and Action Plan indicates a positive step towards meeting the international commitments and EU integration standards on gender mainstreaming in public policies and programs. The Gender Equality in Society Law (approved on 24. 7. 2008) "regulates fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, the protection and equal treatment of women and men with regards to equal chances and opportunities for the exercise of their rights, as well as their participation and contribution in the advancement of all social spheres". Nevertheless, more efficient collaboration is required by the state, particularly by the Directorate of Equal Chances of the Ministry of Labour, Social Issues and Equal Chances, the responsible authority regarding gender equality in Albania, in order to fully contribute to the eradication of gender inequalities and to women's empowerment.

As for the EC's role in Albania, projects financially supported through the EC's pre-accession assistance to Albania have largely focused on human rights in the frame of the democratization process. The main focus has been the strengthening of the NGO sector capacity in functioning as a 'watch dog' with regards to the implementation of the rule of law, democratization process, and good governance. Little space has been given to gender equality and women's empowerment, which are, along with the other themes, important components of the development and EU integration process. The main objective of pre-accession assistance is the strengthening and capacity-building actions for human rights NGOs, their role in promoting human rights and democratic reform and monitoring the human rights respect and legislation implementation in Albania. Although the objectives seem to be overall inclusive for women's rights and gender equality, it can be stated that gender is not a priority area for the EC pre-assistance policies.

Many challenges exist in Albania in relation to gender concerns. Even though there is a good legal framework in place, the problem of compatibility with international standards, harmonization between existing laws, improvement of some segments of the legislation and better implementation/ enforcement of legislation still remain the biggest problem in Albania. Furthermore, gender-based violence is one of the most well known and up-to-date problems

of the Albanian society, along with the low participation of women at decision-making levels, gender inequalities in the labour market, and minor attention to women's economic empowerment. In addition, the reintegration of women and children who were victims of trafficking and face discrimination due to stereotypes in the society has to be dealt with.

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3.3.2 BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Being on the list of EU potential candidate countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been undergoing a complex transition period aimed towards European integration. In terms of gender equality, much has been achieved on the legislative level; however, constraints remain in putting the laws into practice. Furthermore, the process of political, economic and social transition has many priorities and in view of that, gender equality seems to be set aside in the EC's assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet, it is crucial to point out that much more support is needed to strengthen the country's development towards gender equality and women's empowerment.

The legal framework for gender equality is provided by, among others, the Constitution, Gender Equality Law from 2003, Law on Protection of Domestic Violence from 2005, 2008, Criminal Law, Labour Law. The adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2003 made Bosnia and Herzegovina the first country in the region to pass such a comprehensive law; however, additional legislation and other efforts are now urgently required to ensure the full implementation of the law and the realization of gender equality in practice.⁴¹ There is still an enormous gap between the *de iure* and *de facto* situation and it is of high importance that this deficiency is addressed in the EC's pre-accession assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, women's right organizations stress that in terms of gender concerns, the EC supported projects have not been efficient and sufficient, and there is an urgent need to do an independent systematic investigation into their effectiveness. In addition, there is a need to design the projects and provide financial resources for gender specific issues. On the one hand, gender equality has to be a cross-cutting issue in all of the EC's projects, extended into the projects' design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of impact; on the other hand, the EC's assistance should include also specific measures aimed at women's empowerment. Moreover, financial resources, if any, are not enough for gender equality improvements if allocated inefficiently; financial support should be directed to independent women's rights NGOs and experts, and selected on the basis of their expertise and previous accomplishments in the area of gender.

Specific areas which need to be addressed more intensively are the following: Gender-based discrimination and violence; gender segregation in the labour market; The poverty and pauperisation of women-social sector and employment and occupation; Neoconservative tendencies which tend to exclude women from public life and deprive women of their rights, specifically of their reproductive rights; Re-traditionalisation of women's roles in the educational system and media; The absence of gender responsive budgeting; The absence of gender disaggregated data at all levels of the state administration; The participation of women and minorities in the decision-making process; The absence of political will to ensure gender equality and women's human rights (in Parliaments, Councils of Ministers, etc.); Access to education for girls and women, particularly in the rural areas; Access to justice for female victims of discrimination, violence and the violation of their human rights; Access to health care; Corruption and sexual

⁴¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina NGO Shadow Report to the UN CEDAW Committee, *Global Rights*, January 2004, p. 5, http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/pdf/Bosnia&Herzegovina_SR.pdf

harassment in the labour market and within the educational system; the conditions of minority women, especially Roma women, displaced women and refugees.

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3.3.3 KOSOVO

After July 1999, an emergency phase started in Kosovo with the main purpose of commencing plans and projects for the reconstruction and stabilization of the Kosovar society then just coming out of a war. Numerous international donors stepped in to help with the reconstruction and revival of the Kosovar society. During the years of the international protectorate, Kosovo managed to create a solid basis of legal instruments and institutional mechanisms for accomplishing gender equality.

The most significant achievement in terms of gender has been the development of the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality in Kosovo, which has allowed for the building of an institutional framework for making gender equality a reality in Kosovo. In 2004, the Law on Gender Equality was passed, setting up institutional mechanisms for accomplishing gender equality at the local and national level. These mechanisms are: the Agency for Gender Equality (Office of Prime-Minister); the Advisory Office for Good Governance – the Division for Gender Issues (Office of Prime-Minister); the Unit for Gender Equality – the Institution of the Ombudsperson; Officers for Gender Equality in ministries; the Inter-ministerial Council for Gender Equality; Officers for Gender Equality in municipalities; and municipal committees for gender equalities. It is also worth noting here that since 2002, after a decision by the Central Elections Commission, all political parties in Kosovo are liable to have women represented as one-third of the candidates in their election lists. As a result, 30 % of members of parliament in the Assembly of Kosovo are women. This fact alone ranks Kosovo very high internationally regarding the participation of women in politics. The participation of women in other important institutions is also at a relatively good level; for example, 13.8 % of the Kosovo Police Service employees are women.

In spite of the significant achievements in the field of gender issues, more could have been done had all opportunities been used for more meaningful development. Most critiques coming from Kosovar activists in the field of gender issues are addressed against UNMIK (The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo) and its lack of initiatives and the needed will for the implementation of important development projects in the field. The Office of Gender Affairs, acting in the framework of UNMIK since 1999, has played an insignificant role advancing gender equality, limiting its activities to organizing occasional training events completely ignoring local (governmental and non-governmental) initiatives in the process. As an extreme case of an “opportunity lost” one should consider the organization “Kosovo Women’s Initiative”, established in July 1999. KWI was created after the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration allocated a grant of 10 million US dollars to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for the implementation of this project. The idea was to use this fund to support the needs of Kosovar women and to help regenerate and consolidate existing Kosovar women’s organizations, which had been heavily damaged and in some cases destroyed during the war of 1999. However, a grave mistake was made (that would finally result in the complete failure of this initiative) since the planning of allocation of funds was carried out through a “top-down” approach and without any prior consultation of local actors, which would have substantially contributed to the identification of the real needs of Kosovar women and of women’s NGOs. Consequently, most of the grant went to UNHCR and its international partners’ operational costs.

Nevertheless, women’s NGOs believe that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) set up by a Council Joint Action on 4th February 2008 should, unlike

UNMIK, show more readiness to utilize existing capacities, will and enthusiasm for the local NGOs active in the field of gender issues in Kosovo, which would in return allow for cooperation and partnership in developing joint projects.

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3.3.4 MACEDONIA

The EU stresses that gender equality and women's empowerment are high on the agenda of external relations, including pre-accession assistance to Macedonia. However, the IGPN's brief assessment of the gender aspect of the EC's planning, programming and implementation of the pre-accession assistance reveals that gender concerns are in many aspects neglected.

Actual implementation of the scheduled IPA assistance to Macedonia has not started yet. Furthermore, relevant operational structures and systems (the Central Finance and Contracting Unit as Implementing agency) for decentralized management of the IPA are still not operational. The EC's plan is to manage the funds and confer the management on national authorities once they are prepared and all the conditions are met. Currently, some of the activities planned towards achieving the outcomes within the strategic document are implemented within CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation).

In accordance to MIPD, a major share of IPA assistance for the period 2007-2009 will be oriented towards Institutional building and delivered through component 1 (Transition Assistance and Institution Building), where actually the most detailed programming was undertaken.⁴² However, the implementation of these funds is anticipated in 2011. The funds were concentrated around two areas of intervention: implementation of the sectoral reforms and implementation of the *aquis*. It is important to point out that identification and selection of the priority areas were made without participation of the civil society.

Further scrutiny of the EC's assistance reveals a lack of gender concerns in implemented projects. Available documents for 2007 and 2008⁴³ provide lists of projects, developed through the applied consultation mechanism by the Macedonian government. This mechanism was seriously criticized by the civil society for lacking transparency, and involving only a limited number of CSOs, mainly members of the Civic Platform.⁴⁴ No specific projects in regards to gender equality and women's empowerment could be assessed in the documents. Moreover, no specific activity that will ensure gender impact assessment based on specified indicators can be registered in any project fiche.

In addition, it is crucial to point at the lack of expertise within the institutions/administration in gender issues (in many cases almost complete absence). Knowledge and skills for a gender impact analysis in planning, implementation and evaluation should be an obligatory part of the training and consultation process. More to the point, local expertise in the field should be used in order to assist and secure that specific knowledge in the local context will be taken into consideration. Qualitative and quantitative gender data and analysis is not available and therefore not used to serve as a basis for integrating gender aspect and setting gender sensitive indicators in the planning and developing of the projects. These deficiencies influence further monitoring and evaluation of projects' effectiveness, particularly in terms of the impact on women and men.

⁴² Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document 2007-2009 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, *European Commission*, p. 11, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/mipd_fyrom_2007_2009_en.pdf

⁴³ National Programme for the FYR Macedonia under IPA-Transition Assistance and Institutional Building Component for 2007 and 2008

⁴⁴ Out of approximately 6000 national CSOs, 29 only are members of the Civic Platform

Programs for 2007 and 2008 expect the participation of the civil society in the decision making and in providing social services. The main portion of the funding goes to technical assistance for building capacities of the Unit for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Society (0.3 million Euros for 2007 and 0.5 million euros for 2008). The grant scheme (to be managed in the future by the Unit) of 0.8 million Euros for approximately 15 contracts are allocated with expected co-financing of 10-15 %. Taking into consideration the lack of resources and capacities of women's NGOs in Macedonia, it is very unlikely that they will have access to these grants.

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3.3.5 MONTENEGRO

In the past years, Montenegro has established a legal and institutional foundation for gender equality issues; yet, many shortcomings still exist which prevent further achievements in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Although foreign support, including the EC's pre-accession assistance, has been flowing into the country to help with political and socioeconomic reconstruction, gender equality has been overshadowed by other priorities. Also, traditions remain an obstacle as they continue to have an impact on gender relations in Montenegro. In its decade long social crisis, Montenegro has witnessed an intensive revival of patriarchal values and, consequently, women in Montenegro must face obstacles such as high unemployment, high illiteracy rates and low participation in decision-making structures.⁴⁵

Gender is considered a cross-cutting issue in the EC's assistance; however, it is difficult to find out whether the realized activities have had an impact on gender equality, as there is no gender disaggregated data available to measure the impact on men and women. Evaluation from a gender perspective of the European Agency for Reconstruction projects was conducted about two years ago, but the findings are expected to be open to public only in the near future. Overall, it can be said that gender has been treated in quite a formalistic and limited way. To have gender as a cross-cutting issues is not enough to bring real changes, as gender tends to be mentioned as a formality in one sentence of a project, without giving further attention to it.

In Montenegro, the most problematic gender concerns are domestic violence, the position of women in the public sphere, gender-based discrimination and trafficking in human beings. Although domestic violence is qualified as a criminal act according to the new Criminal Code passed in 2004, there is a noticeable general acceptance of domestic violence and it is regarded as a "private matter."⁴⁶ The gender inequalities situation varies across the country; the most problematic areas are the rural ones with higher unemployment and deeply rooted patriarchal traditions. Furthermore, the feminization of poverty is notable from the following figures: according to a survey done in 2004 for the government's Gender Equality Office, only 8% of home owners, 6% of car owners, and 1% business/company owners are women, and, according to this survey, women do not have any savings.⁴⁷ According to the NGO Women's Forum, women in Montenegro own only 1% of all private property.⁴⁸

In order to bring Montenegro closer to European integration, these problems need to be addressed more intensively in the EC's pre-accession assistance. Gender equality is both

⁴⁵ Bending the Bow: Targeting Women's Human Rights and Opportunities, *Open Society Institute*, 2002, p. 87

⁴⁶ Gender Assessment for Serbia and Montenegro, *USAID*, 2002, p. 14,
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACG119.pdf

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

a question of basic human rights and at the same time it is a prerequisite to progress as it is closely connected with the overall development of the country.

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3.3.6 SERBIA

As an EU potential candidate country, Serbia has been undergoing political and socioeconomic transition in order to advance towards EU standards. In terms of gender concerns, Serbia has developed a strong foundation of women's organizations which has been, along with foreign assistance, crucial for bringing gender concerns to the national agenda. At the same time, however, many serious obstacles prevail from the continued practice of patriarchal privileges in politics, the labour market and the private sphere.⁴⁹ Furthermore, although the EC claims a high commitment to gender equality in its assistance to Serbia, in practise, gender issues are generally overshadowed by other priorities of the transition period.

The EC's IPA is a very new instrument, and there seems to be a lack of communication between the European representatives and the women's organizations. Women's autonomous organizing in Serbia has had a comprehensive history since 1978 and the feminist platform, which included opposition to war, nationalism, racism and all kinds of discrimination and violence against women, proved as a strong tool in all the periods in Serbia and regionally. It would be important to develop a channel of communication between the EC Delegation and women's' groups for mutual profit. In a similar way, communication with the State is underdeveloped and the recently established pilot mechanism KOCID (Contact organizations of Civil Society) is at stake, as it is a part of a project. The other concerns which women's groups share with other NGOs is keeping their autonomy and the critical position of civil society.

Furthermore, the application and administration process of EU grants favours more organizations with no genuine programs than those who bring effective outcomes through their work. Finding a way of transmitting EU funds to genuine women activists' work all over Serbia should be one of the priorities, based on the merits of the platform they share and the enormous work and energy they produce. Some obstructions can be found also in the work of other foreign actors. In the years 2006 – 2007, the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) financed one major gender mainstreaming project through the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP). The UNDP gender program did not follow the recommendations of experienced women's groups in the planning of the project. Among the problems of the UNDP gender program were the lack of transparency and the disrespect for women's groups' expertise and achievements. In addition, the EAR delivered money for the multi-year program of the Fund for Social Innovations which was supposed to be one of the leading supportive initiatives in the reform of the social sector. However, due to the political environment after 2003 (when the conservative government stopped the reforms), the FSI program became problematic since one of the demands was a partnership between civil society and institutions.

Overall, many challenges remain in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment in Serbia, despite some significant achievements. Most importantly, there is a need for the adoption of a Gender Equality Law, and for putting the existing laws on gender equality into practise. Among other shortcomings are the following: The low level of institutional gender mainstreaming (state administration, education, health, media, police, judiciary, etc.); The increasing unemployment of women and discrimination in the labour

⁴⁹ Human Development Report for Serbia 2008, *UNDP*, p. 133,
http://www.undp.org.rs/download/nhdr2008_eng.pdf

market; The serious exploitation of women's resources in the private domain and the heavy burden of reproductive work; The extremely low protection of vulnerable women (single mothers, rural women, Roma women, etc.); Increased violence against women, including displays of misogyny in the public discourse, which legitimize exclusion, exploitation and violence; Increased domestic violence and trafficking of women.⁵⁰ More attention should be given to these gender concerns in the EC's pre-accession assistance.

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3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNTRIES UNDER PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To develop comprehensive national policies followed by sufficient funding, based on clearly formulated indicators, effective monitoring and evaluation of the approximation and implementation of the policies and projects, in accordance to already set EU policy for gender equality and specifics of the national context
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity (Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points)
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals (to have a budget line for gender-related activities)
- To strengthen and build the capacity of women's NGOs to act as watch dogs for the implementation of gender policy
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries by setting the minimum standards for consultation of the local stakeholders which will be applied during the process of the development of internal policies and the national programming of IPA (6 weeks consultation, targeting NGOs with gender expertise based on established standards etc.).
- To consider appropriate alternatives to the existing implementation of the concept of gender mainstreaming which proves to be ineffective

Recommendations to the National Governments:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations and their initiatives aimed at addressing women's issues
- To ensure gender expertise of the national administration

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances among women's organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their advocacy and lobbying activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegations/Liaison Office
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments

⁵⁰ Human Development Report for Serbia 2008, *UNDP*, p. 133,
http://www.undp.org.rs/download/nhdr2008_eng.pdf

- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- To advocate for inclusion of projects that specifically target gender issues, apart from having it as a cross-cutting issue

4. GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE ODA OF THE EU MEMBER STATES

4.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

IGPN includes member organizations from several **new EU member states**, particularly from **Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia**. In the context of development cooperation, these countries are considered **newly emerging donors**. Since relatively recently these countries were in the position of EU candidate countries receiving development assistance themselves, their ODA (Official Development Assistance) system is to a certain extent still in a **transformational period**. In view of that, most of the weaknesses in their ODA is related to, among other things, **the lack of a clear strategy, the lack of transparency, and the lack of capacity**. Shortcomings also exist in the gender dimension of their development cooperation, as the following country reports reveal.

Thus, the advocacy activity prepared for these new EU member states is directed at the **gender aspect of their bilateral development cooperation**. On the basis of these country reviews, recommendations are made to the national governments, and to the European institutions.

4.2 COUNTRY REPORTS

4.2.1 BULGARIA

As a newly emerging donor, Bulgaria is facing many problems in its ODA (Official Development Assistance) and in this context, the gender dimension of development aid is not an exception. As pointed out in the 2008 Concord report, there is a lack of capacity within the government and no general framework for development aid exists and consequently, these problems translate into poor coordination and reporting.⁵¹

In July 2007, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued the "Concept Paper on international development" which outlines the main principles, priority regions and sectors, and mechanisms for Bulgarian ODA. The protection of human rights (including the rights of the child and gender equality) is mentioned among the main areas which are to be addressed to achieve the objective of poverty eradication. Among the specific principles which will be guiding Bulgaria's development cooperation is listed the principle of non-discrimination - equal treatment and equal opportunities regardless of sex, race, religious affiliation, age, disabilities, sexual orientation, etc. In addition, gender equality and women's empowerment are included in the Concept Paper in the description of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Commitments to the implementation of the MDGs and other international agreements (agreements of the UN, EC, ILO, etc.) are declared in the Concept Paper. However, in view of the structure of the development aid provided by the Bulgarian state until now, it is difficult to assess whether these agreements have been followed in practice. According to CSOs, documents currently under discussion should provide the mechanisms for control of the disbursement of the aid. These documents include the mid-term strategy for international development drafted by the MFA in June 2008, a regulatory framework for development aid, and a package of documents for funding. The mid-term strategy defines the main thematic directions for Bulgaria's bilateral aid. There was also elaborated a draft version of an

⁵¹ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 35,

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

enactment (needed to be adopted by the Council of Ministers) that regulates the Bulgarian policy in international development cooperation, as well as a package of documents for the provision of funding for projects under the implementation of the mid-term strategy. The gender equality principle is reflected in the guidelines for applications for funding. These documents are indicative for the planned interventions; however, they need to be further discussed.

The future prospects to implement the gender equality principle in development cooperation policy and activities are likely to be positive as the governmental officials from the respective body unofficially expressed interest in discussing the issue.

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4.2.2 CZECH REPUBLIC

Within the framework of the MDGs, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue as well as a goal in itself. Although the Czech Republic is formally committed to the MDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment are highly disregarded in the practice of Czech development cooperation. In the strategy documents of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), gender equality is referred to as a cross-cutting issue; nonetheless, no further attention is given to gender concerns and the twin-track approach is thus completely absent in the Czech ODA (Official Development Assistance).

It is important to mention that since 2007, the Czech ODA system has been going through a transformation process, aimed at centralization of the ODA under the MFA. Until 2010 each project of the Czech ODA will be managed by the Czech Development Agency, and from 2011, the agency will be able to start fulfilling a new conception – with new topics and perhaps also a new list of priority countries in terms of a better coordination. The process of transformation of the Czech ODA system is viewed by FoRS, the Czech platform of development NGOs, as a positive move. With regards to gender concerns, however, a question remains whether the Czech administration will reflect on the critical assessments provided by the civil society organizations. As for example critically pointed out in the 2008 report of Concorde, there is no specific gender strategy in development cooperation of the Czech Republic nor is there earmarked funding for gender issues.⁵² According to the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Czech MFA, the Czech Republic has no gender equality strategy, partially because gender is taken as a cross-cutting issue, partially due to the fact that the Czech ODA system is still being developed and finally also due to the lack of capacity within the framework of the current ODA system.⁵³ In view of that, the transformation process offers an opportunity for improvement and, indeed, a closer inspection of the Czech ODA in the light of gender reveals an urgent need for it.

Overall, there is a lack of gender data in a majority of the projects of Czech bilateral development cooperation, and a lack of evidence that gender equality as a cross-cutting issue is mainstreamed into all phases of the project cycle management. Without gender indicators, it is impossible to assess the impact of the projects on men and women. Moreover, a gender impact assessment is crucial for improving the capacity of development

⁵² No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 37,

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

⁵³ Information obtained by email communication with the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

cooperation and for delivering effective aid.⁵⁴ Furthermore, there are no specific measures in the Czech ODA directed at women's empowerment (the twin-track approach). Consequently, up to the present time, only a few projects can be found in Czech bilateral ODA which focus specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment. These projects include, among others, the following: the project PROFEMME (the promotion of women in Tambacounda diocese, Senegal) realized by Caritas Czech Republic; a project for building a centre for the victims of domestic violence in Serbia realized by ADRA and by the same NGO, the project Power for Safe Motherhood in Zambia; the projects of People in Need in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Namibia; the project I Still Want to Live realized in Ukraine by Bliss without Risk; a project in Burkina Faso realized by Humanitas Africa; a project for the Iman Women's Community Centre in Chechnya realized by Berkat; and a project in Angola realized by the Czech University of Life Sciences.

Yet, even if a project is intended to contribute to women's empowerment, the opposite can happen, as demonstrates Ondřej Horký from the Institute of International Relations in his analysis of the project of agricultural education in Angola.⁵⁵ Although the Czech programming document for Angola emphasizes the necessity of empowering women, the project of the Czech University of Life Sciences in the province of Bié focused on the area of agricultural education has supported above all men: out of 100 accepted students there were 15 women, and when the study was completed by 3 women and 15 men.⁵⁶ As this case reveals, it is necessary to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in the Czech ODA, so that they become an integral part of the overall development processes.

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4.2.3 ESTONIA

Estonian official documents concerning ODA (Official Development Cooperation) refer to gender issues in several instances. Gender equality is generally mentioned in the Principles of Estonian Development Co-operation. Furthermore, according to the Strategy for Estonian Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid 2006-2010, one of the goals of Estonian development co-operation across the areas of activities is to support human development in developing countries, contributing to increased availability of education and to the improvement of the status of women and children. Throughout, Estonian development co-operation intends to address: human rights; gender equality; environmental friendliness. The most important measure in implementing this goal is supporting the work of multilateral organizations. Estonia contributes to programmes involving the promotion of educational issues through UN agencies, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Some references to gender issues can be found also in the practice of Estonian ODA. Gender mainstreaming is taken into account in the project selection process. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) does not have statistics about the gender balance in its grants, although the ministry insists on selecting half of the women among participants from the target countries. Gender equality projects are promoted by some Estonian CSOs which are member organizations of the national platform of development cooperation CSOs – the

⁵⁴ For more information on the linkage of gender equality and aid effectiveness see for example Issues Briefs on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and the Paris Declaration, *OECD*, 2008,

http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_34541_41048822_1_1_1_1,00.html

⁵⁵ Ondřej Horký, *Ženy, muži a rozvoj*, *Rozvojovka.cz*, February 2008,

<http://www.rozvojovka.cz/index.php?id=200&idArt=33>

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Roundtable of Development Cooperation. The MFA consults with the Roundtable of Development Cooperation about issues concerning legislative changes, strategies, and the priorities of development cooperation. The MFA sees the partnership with NGOs vital for initiating new policies, and for planning resources and funds more efficiently.

The priority partner countries of Estonian development assistance are Afghanistan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Although all bilateral projects are listed on the webpage of the Estonian MFA, only two projects seem to be by title-related directly to gender. Firstly, a three-year (January 2008 – December 2010) project Improvement of Georgian State administrative capacity in domestic abuse prevention and victim support by the Estonian Institute for Open Society Research, which focuses on applying the Estonian domestic abuse prevention and victim support system to Georgian conditions and assuring its gradual implementation. As a result of the project carried out by the Estonian Institute of Open Society Research, Georgian State institutions should be capable of effectively controlling the spread of domestic abuse and providing professional support for the victims. Second is the Project on presenting the experiences of Estonian reforms to Georgian NGOs and the public sector, implemented by the Estonian Women's Training Centre in 2004 in co-operation with Georgian women organizations. The central themes of the project were women's political participation, women running for offices in local government and the influences of social reforms on women.

Even though some projects are gender related, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the projects on men and women, as the data is not gender segregated. The projects' final reports are the most common way to assess the quality of the projects and the gender impact of them. The MFA also asks for feedback from partners in the target countries. The officials are generally aware that it is important to assess the gender impact. Furthermore, the Roundtable is also not ready to evaluate the gender impact (also environmental impact, etc) of the ODA projects, admitting to having too little knowledge of it as the theme is new and the evaluation criteria need to be developed first.

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4.2.4 HUNGARY⁵⁷

The Concept Paper of Hungarian International Development Cooperation (IDC), issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 2002, includes among the general aims of the country's IDC to "protect human rights and equal opportunities." Although the Concept Paper indirectly gives support to women in this statement, gender equality and women's empowerment are mentioned in Hungary's IDC policy only in reference to the MDGs. According to the information provided by the MFA's Department for International Development Cooperation, the promotion of gender equality does not appear explicitly in Hungary's IDC policy and activities, either as a topical or as a cross-cutting issue. This is largely attributed to the fact that Hungary's development strategy is generally not complex and finely segmented enough yet and, moreover, other horizontal issues are not integral to it, either. However, both of these are important aims that the governmental actors involved in IDC intend to pursue. As a result, at this stage no strategic document exists that especially stresses the importance of the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in the country's IDC activities.

⁵⁷ This text is based on the country report A Gender Analysis of the Hungarian Development Aid which was prepared by *MONA Foundation* for the project EU-CIS Gender Watch realized by the *Network of East-West Women*. The full 27-page report on Hungary can be accessed at:
http://www.neww.org.pl/download/EU-CIS_Gender_Watch-Hungary.pdf

The current lack of gender mainstreaming in IDC policy has had some effects at the level of IDC implementation and monitoring. According to the information from the IDC implementing agency HUN-IDA based on a telephone conversation, currently the aspect of gender equality does not appear consistently as a requirement in calls for applications related to project grants, or in the contracts signed with the executive organizations. As a result, currently projects are not monitored or registered according to the criterion of the promotion of gender equality. However, some more recent calls for tender, e.g. the call for projects in Afghanistan to develop health services, have required taking into account gender aspects in order to guarantee that the developed services would be accessible for both women and men, and that the project may contribute to the elimination of gender inequalities. Furthermore, there have been a small number of projects that, either partially or entirely, have been aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, among them development projects in Serbia and Afghanistan.

Moreover, gender concerns seem to be followed by Hungarian CSOs which have the experience of applying for a tender from international organizations. For example, Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) integrates the aspect of gender equality and empowerment of women over the whole period of each project (from planning and assessment through implementation to follow-up), according to its own and international standards. In addition, HIA has carried out specific projects for the promotion of gender equality, e.g. a complex social services project in Uzbekistan in cooperation with a local association for disabled women; also, their development strategy for Afghanistan and their implemented Afghan projects take into consideration and promote the situation of women, especially widows; and keeping gender-disaggregated data on projects is integral to their development-related work.

Hungary's ODA lacks a registration system containing gender-disaggregated data which makes it problematic when researching how much of the aid spent has contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Although officials of the MFA and related institutions have seemed quite cooperative regarding the issue, they were only able to provide some information on implemented projects, without any reference to previous or future commitment to gender-related activities, and, importantly, without information on how successful the projects have been.

The national aid watch activities of the HAND Association have opened up a lot of questions about the issue of ODA efficiency and transparency, but the platform's cooperation with policy makers is still in the process of becoming more regular and mutual. This will hopefully facilitate an increased openness on the side of the government to respond to NGO observations on the desired aspects of increased transparency with regard to the issue of gender equality as well.

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4.2.5 LITHUANIA

According to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the priority partner countries of Lithuania's Official Development Assistance (ODA) are Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasus, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the priority areas are the following: the promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights; economic development; Euro-integration processes; and administrative capacities building.

Since development cooperation is an integral part of foreign policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is taking the lead on policy and coordination. The focal point within the Ministry is the Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Department. In January 2008, Lithuanian NGOs established a Platform on Development Cooperation, in order to engage with the MFA in a dialogue on the direction of development cooperation.

Concerning the general amount of assistance, data for the past three years demonstrate steady growth: in 2005 it was 12,3 mln Litas (0,06 % of GNI of Lithuania), in 2006 18,3 mln Litas (0,08%), and in 2007 the amount reached 26,6 mln Litas (0,1 %). The total amount of assistance provided for gender equality and women's empowerment projects is not available. Nevertheless, looking closely at the realized activities, several projects aimed at women can be found in Lithuania's ODA. In 2007, three projects were realized in Afghanistan's Ghor Provinc. The goals of these projects were to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, promote gender equality and empower women, and achieve universal primary education. In 2006, the project "Democracy and Human Rights: strengthening gender equality" in Georgia was supported by Lithuania's ODA.

Although Lithuania has made commitments to the MDGs and other international gender agreements, it is not clear whether these promises are reflected in the practice of development cooperation. There is no gender segregated data on Lithuania's ODA, no gender indicators in the projects' impact assessment. Furthermore, gender equality and women's empowerment is not in the policy priorities or priority areas. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is not present in the official documents of Lithuania's ODA. Overall, it is very difficult to find information on gender in Lithuania's ODA. As also pointed out in the Concorde report of 2008, the "[l]imited access to crucial information affects to an even greater extent the capacity of NGOs to monitor their government's performance and raise awareness among public opinion on what should be the goals of Lithuanian aid."⁵⁸ Furthermore, rather than focusing on poverty which is closely connected to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, Lithuania emphasizes the policy of trade promotion in its development cooperation.⁵⁹

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4.2.6 ROMANIA

As an emerging donor, Romania still needs to develop a more comprehensive strategy on development cooperation. The 2008 Concorde report points at the limited capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) which is responsible for development cooperation: the lack of capacity is the main reason why most of Romania's ODA is channelled through multilateral institutions and programmes, and why there are no clear mechanisms for disbursement of bilateral aid.⁶⁰ The overall problematic situation of the country's development cooperation naturally also affects the gender dimension of Romanian ODA.

According to the current National Strategy on International Development Cooperation Policy, Romania, in the first phase, will focus on a limited number of areas: strengthening democracy and promoting human rights (child protection, equal opportunities, combating discrimination), education, career development and economic development. The main goal of Romania's assistance policy consists of the reduction of poverty, as poverty represents

⁵⁸ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 41,

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

⁵⁹ See for example No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 15

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

⁶⁰ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 44,

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

the major obstacle for a country's social and economic development. Taking into account that most funds are distributed through UN agencies, Romania's strategy aims at integration of the MDGs, including the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment.

In 2007, multilateral financial contributions amounted to 4.675.000 Euro, out of which 2.350.000 Euro were for different international organizations and structures (Global Fund for Combating HIV/SIDA, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA etc), as well as a financial contribution for UNDP, amounting to 2.325.000 Euro, for the implementation, in 2007-2009, of development assistance programs in priority partner states, The Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Serbia (including increasing the institutional capacity and implementing, in Romania, a program of education and information in the development field). The funds distributed in priority states amounted to, as follows: the Republic of Moldova – 800.000 EURO, Georgia – 300.000 EURO, and Serbia – 400.000 EURO. In Moldova, a project specifically focusing on gender issues was funded: Better Opportunities for Youth and Women – 300.000 USD. The overall objective of the project was to support the social, economic and professional reintegration of graduates of boarding schools – orphans or children without family care – mothers with children at risk and pregnant women at risk, by providing shelter services (up to 12 months), with conditions that are similar to family conditions, psychological and social care, provision of education for independent life skills, activities aiming at facilitating beneficiaries' access to labor market and financial and material support.

Even though some references to gender equality and women empowerment exist in Romanian ODA, gender is more or less treated as a secondary issue. A gender mainstreaming strategy is not specifically included in official documents. Moreover, gender concerns are deterred by the fact that Romanian bilateral ODA lacks a clear mechanism for disbursement of aid as well as a long-term strategy. The government does not make multi-year funding commitments, and even one year programming is all too often unclear and uncertain.⁶¹

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4.2.7 SLOVAKIA

The Slovak ODA (Official Development Assistance) derives from the principles and objectives as specified in Slovak legislation (chiefly article no. 617/2007) and the Millennium Development Goals. In this context, the current strategy (2009-2013) refers briefly to supporting gender equality and enhancing women's status. However, the support to gender equality is not explicitly specified in the sectoral priorities of the bilateral aid. Likewise, there is no reference to gender equality in the Mid-term Strategy for trilateral and multilateral aid.

The development aid sector in Slovakia is a fledgling field with a limited number of specialists, not to mention at the MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) level which approaches the plans to expand this field in Slovakia as rather a matter of diplomacy and foreign affairs and not one of humanitarian principles. Likewise, the formation of the Slovak Agency for International Development Assistance (SAMRS), a new structure existing since January 2007, is in the process of developing its internal capacities. The Slovak NGOs (non-governmental development organizations) have been, in particular, pressing for higher professionalization of its staff not only as administrators of the approved grants, but chiefly as experts in the field of development assistance and cooperation. Enhancing understanding of

⁶¹ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 44,

<http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

gender equality and mainstreaming its principles into development assistance at SAMRS and MFA requires further lobbying. However, funds and a willingness to be involved in this effort are limited at the NGDO level.

There is no specific allocation of funds to gender-related projects. There has not been any assessment of development aid carried out from a gender perspective. In general, the awareness of gender equality is relatively low – on the part of the MFA as well as the NGDOs. Between 2004 – 2006 (based on the scanning of the projects financed by Slovak Aid in the given period), there were in total 4 projects explicitly dealing with enhancing gender equality (2 in Afghanistan and 2 in Serbia). It is not possible to assess whether any other approved projects mainstreamed the commitment to supporting gender equality in developing their proposals. Nonetheless, given the low awareness on gender issues, it is likely that the gender approach was ignored in methodologies.

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4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU MEMBER STATES

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

General Recommendations:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To comply with the Consensus on Development and the Commission Communication and place gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of the ODA
- To comply with the Council Conclusions and make gender equality a core aspect in the development policy's programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and to provide special support for women that enables their economic and political empowerment

Concrete Recommendations:

- To improve the institutional framework for implementation of gender into the ODA
- To improve the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the gender aspect in ODA projects
- To follow the twin-track approach and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To improve the transparency of the ODA by making all data, reports and documents available, and by developing the mechanism of grant allocation
- To establish a database of projects supported by the ODA program and make data on ODA projects publicly available (names of organizations, financial data, monitoring, gender impact assessment)
- To promote an understanding of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation at the MFA
- Upon building adequate technical capacities, carry out a gender impact assessment of assistance provided through the ODA
- To ensure close cooperation with CSOs, including women's rights organizations, in terms of policy and strategy formulation
- To increase gender expertise among the national development constituency
- To ensure an increase in awareness among the population about development problems, including gender issues
- To strengthen the poverty reduction focus in the ODA

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To press for EU Member States' development cooperation policy to include a gender equality perspective consistent with EU-level policy and commitments
- To provide information to new EU members on older EU donor states' experiences and good practices in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in development
- In relation to gender mainstreaming, the EU should be leading by example. European CSOs say that the EU is failing to deliver on its promises. Implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy is still hindered by a number of factors (mainly, the inadequate allocation of human and financial resources, the evaporation of policy commitments at the level of program implementation, limited gender competence among staff members, and the absence of political will) and is undermined by other EU policy initiatives, most importantly by the neo-liberal economic policy approach.⁶²

⁶² Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 7, <http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The central theme of this report is the gender dimension of the EU's development cooperation and pre-accession assistance concerning Central, Eastern, Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Although the EU has been politically and legally bound by a number of documents to promote gender equality and women's empowerment outside its borders, challenges persist in the practical execution of these commitments. As a network of women's organizations, the IGPN has attempted to identify the shortcomings of these regions with regards to gender concerns and to advocate for improvements. Thus, **this advocacy effort has aimed to remind the European and national administrations their policy commitments and to bring about change.**

Even the modest findings of this report reveal that there is an **urgent need for enforcement of the existing policies on both European and national levels**, as well as for **policy change in some of the recipient countries**. The EU officially follows the twin-track approach (gender mainstreaming and specific measures); in reality, however, there is usually a limited number of gender specific projects in the recipient countries and gender mainstreaming is not a widespread symptom in the EC financed activities. Generally speaking, there is a lack of gender indicators, and it is clear that gender is not typically integrated into all stages of the project cycle; neither is gender mainstreaming applied into all the priority areas of EU's country strategy documents.

Concerning the dialogue of the EC Delegations with civil societies, the European representatives have claimed that transparency of the political dialogue will be ensured; however, they were unable to reply to the inquiries of IGPN regarding the review of the country strategy documents. Furthermore, based on the communication with the EC Delegations, it can be concluded that **some Delegations appear to lack the gender capacity** (i.e. the newly set up Delegations in Azerbaijan and Armenia), or **gender is only one small activity within the workload of the Gender Focal Points**. In addition, although there are some projects using the EC's assistance focused on women, they are not always supportive to gender equality and women's empowerment; in Ukraine for example, there were socially-oriented projects which supported the **traditional gender roles rather than having an impact on policy change**. Moreover, the country reports frequently conclude that **NGOs with gender expertise have encountered financial difficulties** due to the lack of specifically gender-oriented calls for proposals.

Furthermore, the reports of the **recipient countries illustrate similar concerns in the realm of gender equality**. In these traditional patriarchal societies, women are responsible for unpaid home duties; they are vulnerable to poverty, especially in the rural areas, exposed to human trafficking, and are very far off from their political and economic empowerment. In addition, rapid social and economic changes have been associated with male unemployment which is closely linked to the increase in male alcoholism, and consequently to domestic violence (especially in the region of Central Asia). These few examples from the recipient countries demonstrate that gender concerns must be addressed in a broader context, by mainstreaming gender into all development policies.

As for the development cooperation of individual EU states, country reports demonstrate that **gender equality is highly neglected in the bilateral ODA of the new member states**. Among the most important deficiencies are **the lack of a gender strategy** (i.e. the Czech Republic), **the lack of gender expertise and understanding of gender mainstreaming at the MFAs** (i.e. Slovakia), **poor coordination of development aid** (Bulgaria), **the lack of efficiency and transparency of the ODA** (i.e. Hungary), and **disregard of the twin-track approach**.

Undoubtedly, in order to strengthen the efforts in delivering on gender equality and women's empowerment, the support of the EU and individual governments must go much further than beyond proclamation. Hence, it is of high importance that the European officials and the representatives of the national administrations take this report as valuable feedback to their work, and reflect on the recommendations by placing gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of development cooperation.

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ABOUT IGPN

The International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) is a membership-based, non-profit, non-governmental organization and was established in autumn 2005 in order to strengthen and foster the policy work impact of the women's movement and to ensure the sustainability of women's movements in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Formerly affiliated with the Network Women's Program of the Open Society Institute (NWP OSI), this network of now independent NGOs has formed a partnership based on a common vision and common goals.

IGPN influences policies at all levels, using the capacity and expertise of its members. Based on the concept that access to resources empowers women, we guarantee their access to the power and shared responsibility of public affairs. We will continue advocacy activities to increase funds for the women's movement, monitor where that money is channelled to, participate at UN reform discussions, and work to increase the political representation of women. Through training and collaboration we foster the capacity of our members.

IGPN member countries include:

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan