

## Coordinated efforts - toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence<sup>1</sup>

December 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 – November 30<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Autonomous Women's Center** with partners in the Action:

Association SOS Help Line for Women and Children – Victims of Violence;  
Centre for Women War Victims- ROSA;  
United Women Banja Luka;  
Union - National Council for Gender Equality; AOF/WAVE,  
Austrian Women's Shelter Network/Women against Violence Europe  
European Women's Lobby (associate) and 23 women's organizations

### Executive summary

By effective implementation of the Action a significant contribution has been made to the achievement of the ambitiously set overall objective. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which was the framework for all activities, *has been ratified* in 4 out of 6 countries (Slovenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia), respectively in 2 out of 4 WB countries. Progress has been made in *harmonizing* legislation with the Convention's standards in all 5 countries. The partner organizations have prepared 62 policy proposals and amendments to the laws, out of which 47 have been adopted so far (23 local women's CSOs created 18 proposals for changes in local policy, out of which 13 have been adopted). In the next period, along with strong advocacy activities by women's CSOs, positive changes can be expected in the availability of specialized services for victims of GBV, greater allocation of funds from the budget, the establishment of the more efficient procedures and better administrative database on GBV.

A significant progress has been made in achieving the specific objective. All involved women's organizations (29) *have improved their capacity* (for analysis, monitoring, advocacy, communication with the media, knowledge on the contents of the Convention and the jurisdiction of the independent regulatory bodies for the protection of citizens' rights) through learning, long-term cooperation and exchange of information. Participation in the creation of a methodology for key activities will have long-term positive effects, because it contributes to a deeper understanding and experience of ownership of the acquired knowledge and products.

High quality activities have been conducted, which have contributed to the exceptional visibility of the topic and partner organizations that managed to draw the attention of target groups, final beneficiaries and the general public. *Joint advocacy campaign* for the ratification of the Convention was well-designed under the slogan "I sign!", which had a clear message, adopted by a large number of citizens, public figures, government and institutional authorities, other CSOs. A large number of various materials (posters, billboards, city lights, video clips, radio spots, postcards, personalized postage stamp, booklets, leaflets, outdoor advertisement on buses, etc) were produced, available through various actions and the media, in 11 languages<sup>2</sup>, which contributed to spreading information about the content of the Convention. The series of street actions have mobilized citizens to leave their signatures, messages of support and to

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<sup>1</sup> **European Commission**, Partnership Programmes for Civil Society Organisations, EuropeAid/132438/C/ACT/Multi (Contract no. 2012/306-568)

<sup>2</sup> Including 4 minority languages – Roma, Hungarian, Albanian and Turkish, as well as sound material for blind and visually impaired people in Serbian and Hungarian.



send requests to the decision makers. The campaign has been supported through media sponsorship for broadcasting spots (e.g. in Slovenia it was 12 times more than the invested funds). A large number of media reports (a total of 997: 385 in 2013 and 612 in 2014), which followed all the events organized by women's CSOs, contributed to the *visibility* of the actions and topic. The quality of *baseline studies* on the compliance of laws and strategies with the Convention (for 51 articles), made on the basis of the joint methodology in all 5 countries in the region, have contributed to successful dialogue between women's CSOs and decision-makers. Local organizations have drafted *joint reports* (5) on the satisfaction of women victims of GBV with the conduct of police and social services, and about local policies in this area. A unique guide with *indicators for monitoring* implementation of the Convention standards was created. The quality of these products has contributed to the high credibility of women's CSOs and their better negotiating position. All the analyzes and indicators provide an excellent basis for monitoring future changes and processes, as well as for reporting to national coordination bodies and expert groups in the Council of Europe about the implementation of the standards of the Convention. Advocating for the establishment of a *unique administrative database* on GBV has started, and since it is an inter-sectoral and serious task, a lot of effort is needed to achieve progress.

There were organized total of 279 meetings and public discussions (85 in 2013 and 194 in 2014), including international conferences, which were attended by at least 3.605 representatives of decision-makers and relevant institutions, in order to inform them and advocate for improvement of the situation in the field of VAW. Involvement of a large number of associates and decision-makers at the national and local level, as well as good quality informing and advocating have contributed to the visible changes, despite the aggravating external circumstances<sup>3</sup> and regardless of the persistent resistance of individual decision-makers<sup>4</sup>.

In direct contact, women's CSOs have informed 9,654 women who have experienced GBV (final beneficiaries) about their rights. Although the need for a complaint for misconduct of the relevant institutions was identified in 813 cases, only 32 women have decided to submit a formal complaint. This confirms the fear and mistrust in the result of the proceedings, what still needs to be addressed. All local organizations advocated for the establishment of better services for victims of GBV.

Findings of the *external evaluation* have confirmed that the Action is strategically well planned (coherent, with multilayered approach), and relevant: "All activities were implemented as planned, in timely manner and in a qualitative way. All expected results were achieved. Significant progress has been made in achieving both specific as well as overall objective. Impact on the target groups has been significant. The Actions' efficiency was on the high level. By effective implementation the Action sustainability is achieved on all levels: financial, institutional, policy. Finally, the Action is highly replicable, in wider region, but also in EU member countries that have not yet ratified the Convention". *Recommendations* of external evaluation for the further period include: "ensuring space for potential unexpected delays/events during planning; increasing level of support to local CSOs; strengthening exchange between EU and regional countries; increasing promotion of the results of the Action".

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<sup>3</sup> Regular or early elections were organized in even 4 countries (BiH, Serbia, Macedonia and Slovenia); during 2014 Serbia, BiH and Croatia were hit with a huge flood damage, which has mobilized the attention of decision makers and the public.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the Minister of Justice in Slovenia and Minister of Social Affairs in Croatia have shown strong resistance to the ratification of the Convention, although women's organizations received support from other decision-makers at the highest state level.

