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The poverty risks of women who have experienced violence – initiatives for improving social inclusion policy

Executive Summary and Recommendations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The study was created within the project *Towards Social Cohesion – influencing social inclusion policy for multiply marginalised groups of women and victims of violence*, implemented by the *Autonomous Women’s Centre* in cooperation with partner organisations *Centre for Women War Victims* (Croatia), *United Women Banja Luka* (BiH) and *Association SOS Telephone* (Slovenia) during 2011 and 2012. The *Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia*, as a collaborator on the project, provided the information and consultation support during the implementation of the project activities. The project was funded by the European Union within the IPA Regional Programme 2009 – *Civil Society Facility*.

The long-term goal of this project is greater participation and influence of women in the Western Balkan countries on the processes of policy-making in the field of social inclusion and their more active participation in the EU accession processes. In relation to the target group encompassed by the project, the women that have experienced violence in the family context and women from multiply marginalised social groups, four specific areas have been selected:

- *Childcare* (parenting support, alimony/child support, priority to the enrolment of children in kindergartens, etc.),
- *Employment* (retraining and adult education, labour and income),
- *Social housing*,
- *Accessible justice* (expanded free legal aid – secondary legal aid).

Within the selected areas the following have been implemented: (1) analysis of legal acts and strategic documents related to women’s rights, (2) analysis of the needs and problems faced by women from marginalised groups and women survivors of violence in exercising their rights, and (3) analysis of policies in the European Union and three EU countries: Spain, Finland and Slovenia.

Associates of the Autonomous Women’s Centre in data gathering and processing, legal analyses and recommendations preparation were as follows:

- Women’s organisation: “... From the Circle – Vojvodina” (Novi Sad), Association of Roma Novi Becej - SOS telephone in the languages of national minorities (Novi Becej), Women’s Alternative (Sombor), Damad (Novi Pazar), Women’s Centre (Užice), Impulse (Tutin), Human Rights Committee / SOS Telephone (Vranje), SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence (Vlasotince) and Women for Peace (Leskovac), who participated in conducting focus-group discussions and interviews,
- Svjetlana Timotić (“... From the Circle – Vojvodina”), Radmila Gujaničić and Svetlana Petrović (Užice Women’s Centre) and Suzana Antić Ristić, Nadica Stošić and Milica Mitić (Human Rights Committee/SOS Telephone Vranje), who analysed local documents and prepared proposals for the improvement of social policy measures related to women exposed to violence;¹
- Ivan Sekulović, EU Financial and Technical Assistance Coordinator of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, who prepared the analysis of legislative and strategic framework of the Republic of Serbia from the perspective of women’s rights;²
- Dr Dragica Pavlović-Babić and Dobrinka Kuzmanović from the Institute of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, who conducted the training for representatives of

1 Documents available at <http://www.socijalna-kohezija.womenngo.org.rs/dokumenta>

2 Report available at <http://www.socijalna-kohezija.womenngo.org.rs/dokumenta>

women's organisation on the application of qualitative research techniques, assisted in designing instruments for the field data collection and developed the final report;³

- Sonja Robnik MA and Maruša Gortnar, experts from Slovenia, who prepared the analysis of policies of the European Union, Finland, Spain and Slovenia in achieving women's equality and support to victims of violence.⁴

Results of the analyses were presented and discussed within two thematic working meetings attended by representatives of the following state institutions: Urban Development Programme, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality, National Employment Service, Secretariat for Child Protection of the City of Belgrade, Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Institute of Psychology of the Faculty of Psychology in Belgrade, and nongovernmental organisation "... From the Circle – Vojvodina", who greatly contributed to the practical implementation of the collected data and analyses with their suggestions and ideas.

The study contains an overview of results of the mentioned analyses arranged according to the selected fields as follows:

- I. Introduction
- II. Summary of the analyses results
- III. Violence against women
- IV. Childcare and social support
- V. Employment, labour and income
- VI. Social housing
- VII. Accessible justice
- VIII. Discrimination, poverty and social exclusion
- IX. Conclusions
- X. Recommendations

Studies on this issue, prepared by the *Centre for Women War Victims* and the *United Women Banja Luka*, containing an overview of the situation, legal and strategic solutions and recommendations for Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are available on the web page created within this project: <http://socijalna-kohezija.womenngo.org.rs/>

SUMMARY OF THE ANALYSES RESULTS

Analysis of the Serbian legislation from the women's rights perspective

The legislative framework of the Republic of Serbia is partially harmonised with the international legal framework in terms of social inclusion of women and especially vulnerable groups of women. This is primarily related to the harmonisation with documents of the United Nations, The Council of Europe and the European Union. In the EU legislation, the so-called *gender mainstreaming*⁵ trend is particularly present. The National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and the Promotion of Gender Equality (2009) refers to this approach through the priority *Mainstreaming Gender Dimension in the Legislation for the Promotion and Clear Definition of Gender Equality Principles*. In this context, the subject of regulations analysis was a detailed examination of 44 laws, by-laws and strategies in the selected areas defined as follows: (1) childcare, social services, alimony, (2) employment, retraining, adult education; (3) social housing, (4) accessible justice, (5) other relevant documents.

3 Report available at <http://www.socijalna-kohezija.womenngo.org.rs/dokumenta>

4 Reports available at <http://www.socijalna-kohezija.womenngo.org.rs/dokumenta>

5 European Commission Communication: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities" (COM(96)67final).

The aim of the analysis was to determine the presence of provisions that directly or indirectly recognise women and particularly vulnerable groups of women, such as victims of violence as subjects of rights in the mentioned regulations and formulate appropriate recommendations for improving the content and implementation of the regulations.

The analysis of regulations related to women's rights pointed to two key problems:

1. *Inadequate recognition of women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights.*
Out of the 44 analysed sources, only 26 regulations recognise directly women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights. Of these victims of violence were identified as subjects of rights in only 13 regulations. A total of 17 regulations indirectly recognise women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights, while one regulation does not contain provisions relevant to the social inclusion of women and vulnerable groups of women.
2. *Absence of a coherent framework for implementation and reporting on implementation.*
Of 18 strategies, only 12 have the adopted action plan for their implementation, while only 5 have a relevant report on the action plan implementation.

Based on the general problems and certain specific problems identified in this analysis, general and specific recommendations were formulated for improving the legislative and strategic framework of the Republic of Serbia.

Experience analysis of women survivors of domestic violence

In the period from July to November 2011 a *qualitative research* was conducted in the territory of Serbia with *women from multiply marginalised social groups* as the target group. The research was conducted in order to gain insight into the problems faced by women victims of domestic/intimate partner violence, and establish links between exposure to violence and the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Within the research, *14 focus-group* and *5 individual interviews* were conducted. The preparation and conduct of interviews were carried out by women engaged in local women's nongovernmental organisations, who had previously attended training for the application of the used methods. The research covered four topics: (1) childcare, (2) housing, (3) employment and (4) accessible justice.

The focus of this research was a specific group of women whose social position was multiply threatened. The problem with intimate partner violence is only one, although very dramatic aspect of their position. Typically, these are women with relatively low education level and professional qualifications, mostly unemployed, with rare, mostly unfavourable, poorly paid and insecure job opportunities. Their parental position is strained by housing and financial vulnerability and insecurity, and they are exhausted by time-consuming and mostly unpleasant lawsuits. Their quality of life is quite low, as well as the quality of health care. Due to the long-term exposure to stress, there are real risks for deterioration of their general health.

These women feel helplessness and experience a sense of being left on their own. These feelings are based on the repeated bad experiences, especially with the state institutions which are supposed to be the first to offer help and protection. Early marriage, exposure to stereotypes of patriarchal family and marriage relations, with predominantly low educational level and unemployment are factors that contribute to accepting violence and staying in abusive relationships, as well as the stereotypes that, according to these women, are demonstrated by public institutions. However, the substantially different are the estimates and behaviour of younger women who are less willing to endure violence.

Childcare: Almost all women in the sample are mothers. For them, motherhood and childcare are the defining factor of identity, which affects self-esteem and important decision making. The women recognise education as an issue of particular importance for their children and are very sacrificial in an effort to provide them with regular education and studying conditions. Educational institutions are assessed as relatively more sensitive and responsive to their situation. Differences in cooperation depend on the age of children; cooperation is better when it comes to younger children, while in older age groups school is often not interested

in solving problems. The childcare issue is closely related to exercising the right to alimony and child support, its amount and the regular payment. The unresolved issue of childcare is the biggest obstacle for their employment. The women whose children have (chronic) health problems, often due to the lack of understanding and/or support of institutions and environment, feel rejected and left on their own.

Employment, labour and income: The common feature the majority of the women survivors of violence is that they are without a permanent, steady job and thus without stable finances. Only few of them have their own pensions. Women who were employed say that at the beginning they tried to cover up problems they had in abusive relationships. Almost all say that they encountered understanding and compassion in their work environment. As the employment opportunities have dramatically reduced in recent years, they try to manage by “not choosing jobs”, but working in grey economy, having part-time and/or seasonal jobs. In this regard, there is a set of problems they face when working for private employers: poor working conditions, contributions to the health and pension funds are not paid, short-term employment contracts, non-observance of working time and the right to vacation ... Some aspects of the problems at work are typical or more intense among this population: the superiors sometimes change their attitude toward them because of their status, use harsh and insulting criticism or criticise without any real reason.

Housing: The housing issue is one of the issues that directly condition the independence of women and their exit from a violent partner relationship. Most interviewed women consider their housing issue as unresolved or temporarily resolved. Many women lived or still live in inadequate housing conditions (lack of housing space, poor equipment, unsanitary conditions, etc.). The legal opportunity to evict temporarily the abuser from the house/apartment because of the violence is completely new to them, and women are generally the ones that have left the house. A lot of women live in rented accommodation, in constant uncertainty and fear. Often changes of residences in a very short period of time, are caused by the lack of finances, the fact the landlords did not want to experience violence in their environment, or *a priori* had a negative attitude towards divorced women or single mother... In rented accommodation, women cannot use the legal benefits for paying utility bills. The majority of women live in the space they do not own. Paying for the cost of living for the unemployed, even for employed women is a major problem. When it comes to refugees and displaced persons from Kosovo and Bosnia, as well as members of the Roma ethnicity, their housing situation is even worse. For some women a temporary stay in a *shelter* and assistance of nongovernmental organisations is priceless.

Accessible justice: The majority of respondents took part in legal proceedings, mainly because of divorce, division of joint property, alimony and domestic violence. They would contact legal services in the Centre for Social Work, municipality and nongovernmental organisations. When it comes to the satisfaction with legal services, the women's opinions are divided, from extremely negative to extremely positive. The women report that they did not have adequate information and did not know who to refer to and how in the situations where their basic human rights were violated. Usually, they would first call the police, but as a rule, did not get any help. All the interview participants agreed that free legal aid is an absolute priority for women who find themselves in these situations.

Analysis of the European Union policies

The key strategic documents of the European Union were reviewed concerning the politics of poverty reduction, social inclusion and equality between men and women: the *European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men: Women's Charter and Gender Equality Strategy 2010-2015, Resolution on the Situation of Single Mothers*. In relation to the four selected topics examples of national solutions and/or initiatives of women's nongovernmental organisations were emphasised, specialised in supporting women exposed to violence, which could indicate the directions of changes of laws and policies in Serbia.

The new *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*, adopted in April 2011, as the first legally binding international document in Europe,

is a framework for future legislative and strategic changes in Serbia in the field of prevention of violence against women, victim protection and punishment of perpetrators. Although while signing the Convention the Republic of Serbia expressed its reservations over Article 30 Paragraph 2 and Article 44 paragraphs 1d, 3 and 4 of the Convention,⁶ we believe that the EU accession process will contribute to the ratification of the *European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes*, which would include all women who have been seriously injured or lost their lives due to violence, as well as their dependent family members. We are confident that the reform of laws and policies in protecting women from violence in Serbia will follow the best practices of European states, notably Austria and its *Second Act on Protection against Violence (2009)*.

European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion identifies single parent families and families with one employed member as groups of employed population most at risk of poverty. Achieving the goal of poverty reduction will require unified efforts and instruments at the EU level, but the main responsibility lies on the member countries. Consequently, the Commission has identified key areas for action: measures in the entire spectrum of public policy, greater and more successful use of EU funds, information based promotion of social innovations, working through partnerships and exploiting the potential of social economy, improving the policy coordination among member states. Key strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia include some of the recommendations and policies of the European documents, but their coordination and implementation are insufficient and inefficient.

Closer integration of social policies and policies against discrimination plays a key role in addressing specific aspects of poverty widespread among multiply discriminated groups such as migrants, Roma, persons with disabilities, people in a situation of homelessness, but also women, elderly, youth and children.

Balancing the different areas of life is essential for reducing poverty and social exclusion of women. The existing measures in Serbia do not sufficiently stimulate the participation of men/fathers in family responsibilities. Flexible models of work, temporary and part-time jobs while trying to match family responsibilities with work commitments, may have adverse long-term effects on employment, income, career advancement and pensions of women, and thus it is necessary to explore solutions that are not to the detriment of women. High quality and accessible care services (care for children and elderly family members) and educational services for children including the efficient realisation of alimony/child support obligations by fathers, are key measures to improve women's position. Examples of legal solutions of Finland, Spain, Netherlands, Slovenia or England and Wales can serve the creation of better legal regulations in Serbia.

Monitoring the implementation of laws that prohibit discrimination based on sex in employment, self-employment, occupational choices, criteria in job selection or candidate selection, equal pay for equal work, and efficient implementation of positive action measures (in accordance with the Directive 2006/54/EC⁷) are necessary for achieving economic independence of women and respecting their dignity and integrity. Serbia has adopted key legislation and strategies in this area, but the effects of their implementation are not sufficiently visible. A particular problem is the lack of gender-sensitive statistics and the lack of reports on implementation.

Preventing all forms of gender-based violence, including harmful customs and traditional practices is a part of European policy that has a support in key strategic documents in Serbia. As a part of an integrated response to the needs of women exposed to violence and in order to reduce the risk of poverty among women and their children, of particular importance for the decision of women to leave violent relationships, in addition to employment and childcare, are different forms of support in providing housing, from temporary accommodation in a safe environment (women's shelters), through housing over a transitional period, to finding a new

6 Article 30 *Compensation* includes the right to compensation for damages suffered as a consequence of any offense under this Convention; paragraph 2 this article defines a secondary obligation of the state regarding compensation. Article 44 Jurisdiction defines different requirements under which the member states must provide jurisdiction over the criminal offenses covered by this Convention.

7 Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

home and financial aid/relief for the cost of living and regulating residency status for women who do not have it. Free legal aid, including information provision, writing appeals, psycho-social support in court proceedings, and representation is of critical importance to women exposed to violence and should be available to them.

Along with the strategic commitments of the European Union and the solutions of individual states, initiatives of Austrian and Croatian women's organisations are shown (*Vienna Women's shelter, Autonomous Women's House Zagreb, Centre for Women War Victims – ROSA and Entrepreneurial Centre – ROSA*) as examples of comprehensive approaches to supporting women exposed to violence, offering services in the field of employment, training and housing besides the psychological and legal assistance.

The *European Women's Lobby*, at its annual conference in May 2012 (in the European year of active aging and solidarity between generations) issued a manifesto: *Women's Socio-Economic Rights and Gender Equality from a Life Cycle Perspective*,⁸ calling for gender-sensitive approach throughout the life cycle of all political and economic decisions that shape Europe's future. The recommendations emphasise that policy makers should enable women of all ages and backgrounds and their organisations to participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of all policies and measures that seek to achieve the economic independence of women and their active participation in all areas, on an equal basis with men, during their entire life cycle. The manifesto includes recommendations in 4 key areas of action.

In the *economic and social policies* obligations are required with regard to equality between women and men within the sustainable comprehensive development, defined by the EU Strategy 2020. The implementation of alternative economic models is recommended, sustainable for people and planet, which should include new ways of valuing "care economy", which have so far been neglected in economic decision-making. Care work, paid or unpaid, formal or informal, must be examined, so that investments in this sector reflect fundamental economic and social contributions this sector makes to society. The need of society for care of dependent members is constantly growing and must be resolved through equal contributions of women and men, as a common social responsibility.

In connection with the *care and employment policy* it is required that the EU Strategy 2020 places this sector on the equal footing with the "green economy" and "ICT sector" and creates a gender sensitive and inclusive labour market. Fully paid maternity, paternity, parental carer's leave, return to work after childbirth, as well as continuing education for women and men, makes it possible to avoid economic sanctions later in life (insufficient pensions), which now affect mainly women. The guarantees must be provided for the full participation of women in the labour market, regardless of their education: women of childbearing age should not be discriminated against because of the giving birth and taking care of children; women over 50 must be regarded as a valuable workforce; women of all educational levels must be provided an opportunity for life-long learning. It is necessary to assure the equality of women and men in promoting "flexicurity strategies" that are re-designed at the labour market.

"Security" can have a different meaning for men and women in various stages of their lives: security as a prerequisite for free choice, security not to be discriminated against, security to find quality employment, security that dependents are being taken care of, security that someone takes care of you, security to have equal salaries and pensions, and decent adequate income in the period out of the labour market. Binding gender equality objectives should be developed, and practical outcomes of flexicurity, which include: realising and strengthening the *Barcelona Childcare Targets*,⁹ and beyond that, towards increasing the provision, quality, affordability and accessibility of care, including quality care for the elderly.

8 EWL Manifesto – *Women's Socio Economic Rights and Gender Equality from a life-cycle perspective* (May 2012), <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article3545>

9 At the Barcelona Summit, held in 2002, the European Council set the objectives for providing childcare services by the year 2010. Childcare services in the EU, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/592>, July 2012.

In the part relating to *salary and pension* it is claimed that gender pension gaps are the result of gender inequalities accumulated during women's life, which increases the risk of poverty and social exclusion as they age. "Zero tolerance" is requested with regard to the salary gaps and the policy that will annually reduce the gap by minimum 5% in each EU member state. This requires, but does not exclude other activities: evaluation of salaries and working conditions and strengthening women's negotiating power in the economic sectors in which women are the majority (especially care, health, education, retail, public and social services); addressing highly gender segregated labour market, especially in the "green" and "ICT" sectors, and making the care sector attractive to men; guaranteeing salary transparency. The EU gender pension gap indicator is required to be set as one of the ways for resolving and monitoring the impact of gender on the ongoing reforms of the pension system.

In the field of social security and tax policy the treatment of women as "dependent" or "second earners" in taxation and social security systems is condemned. It is necessary to provide individualisation regarding the right to social security and taxes. At the macro-economic level it is necessary to close the salary gap between women and men, which will provide greater security of women and less reliance on social benefits due to their low income. The outdated concepts related to household composition and family models should be redefined. The data should be shown in relation to gender and measures to address the feminisation of poverty throughout the lifespan. The nuclear family with the "male breadwinner" is less prevalent in European society, which requires a redefinition of women's status and new models of social security and taxes. Gendered breakdown of data, which is currently not the practice, would allow greater insight into the risk of poverty (e.g. "single parent" and "cohabitants" are at increased risk of poverty, and women constitute a majority in both groups).

Initiatives for amending legal provisions resulting from the analyses

Reviewing the status and needs of women who are (were) exposed to intimate partner violence in family in relation to the existing legal provisions in Serbia, international standards and strategic goals of the EU and legal provisions of the EU member states, have led to a series of proposals developed by the Autonomous Women's Centre, submitted to decision makers at the national and local level, directly and/or in cooperation with local women's organisations in Serbia or through the Ombudsperson.

The proposed amendments to the *Criminal Code* (24 articles) aim to ensure an adequate institutional mechanism for the protection of children and women against all forms of violence, according to the conventions that establish standards in this area.¹⁰ Comments on the *Draft Civil Code* have been created in order to emphasise the unacceptability of the solutions that, according to the AWC, take family relations a step back from the standards achieved so far.

A proposal for *improving the collection of mandatory alimony* has been formulated, which implies amendments to the *Law on Enforcement and Security*, as well as the amendments to the *Draft Civil Code* (Part III – Family Relations). The proposed model of mandatory collection of alimony includes: (1) formation of the *Alimony Fund* (whose establishment is envisaged in the *Draft Civil Code*, Art. 193–197); (2) *enforcement measures for non-payment of alimony*, and (3) *the role of private enforcement officers*.

After consultations with women's organisations, AWC prepared amendments to the *draft Law on Social Welfare* (LSWs) and submitted them to the Ombudsperson, who accepted them and explained them at the National Assembly (2011). One of the amendments related to the regulation of a *parent carer service*. Although this amendment was not adopted, the need was partially recognised within Article 94 of LSW, so that one parent who is not employed, after 15 years of direct childcare, is recognised the right to a pension in the amount of minimum pension insurance of the employed. The second proposal was related to the consistency in the legal

¹⁰ The Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which was ratified by the Republic of Serbia in 2010, and the Council of Europe Convention on the prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence, signed by the Republic of Serbia in April 2012.

provisions on the *plurality of service providers and public procurement*, as well as the procedure for providing social services. The proposal was not adopted, but the Government's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team, bearing in mind the comments of AWC, developed proposals for amendments to the *Law on Public Procurement* (which includes a new section on reserved contracts and amendments to the articles regarding the criteria for the evaluation of bids) so that they meet the requirements of a social nature, in other words, contain specific requirements regarding the execution of the contracts that may include requirements of a social nature.¹¹

AWC has also initiated the changes at the local level of protection. In the *Decision on the Rights and Social Protection Services the City of Belgrade* a change has been initiated and adopted which equates the rights of all women victims of domestic violence (that meet certain economic criteria) in terms of *financial assistance* for a period of one year. A similar initiative, in cooperation with AWC has been proposed by a women's organization "... From the Circle – Vojvodina" in relation to the *Decision on social protection of Novi Sad*.

Local initiatives have been also launched for *social housing* issues, for expanding the beneficiary group that is entitled to social housing in supportive environment to the women victims of domestic violence. The initiative was adopted for the territory of the City of Belgrade (*Decision on the Rights and Social Protection Services of the City of Belgrade*), although the adopted solution is not gender sensitive (it refers to "persons" and not women). A similar model was used to propose amendments to the *Decision on Social Protection of the City of Novi Sad* ("... From the Circle – Vojvodina" and AWC), *Decision on the Rights in the Field of Social Protection and Social Security of citizens of Vranje* (Human Rights Committee and AWC), as well as the *Decision on Social Protection of Uzice* (Women's Centre and AWC), along with the proposal for exemption from payment of housing and communal services for women victims of domestic violence. An initiative has been also launched to amend the *Local Policy of the Town of Vranje towards Women Survivors of Violence* (Human Rights Committee and AWC), with a proposal to: (1) develop a new Rulebook to precisely regulate the housing of women and children victims of violence in a shelter for victims of domestic violence; (2) eliminate provisions that stipulate that women victims of violence pay for the accommodation, and that accommodation costs of women and children victims of violence in the shelter have to be paid by the local governments (Vranje and other municipalities) in the territory of victims of violence; (3) provide special space for women and children victims of violence that would be safe.

AWC, in cooperation with the 3 networks of civil society organisations ("Women-Poverty-Development", "Women Against Violence" and "Network of Organisation for Children of Serbia - MODS") initiated the accession of the Republic of Serbia to the *EU program Daphne III*, which had an effect on authorities. A less successful initiative, which will not be abandoned in the upcoming period, referred to the proposal of AWC and 24 women's organisations from the "Network of Women-Poverty-Development" to create a *Fund against Inequality*, for the improvement of position of women, within budgets of municipalities and towns in Serbia, as well as at the national level. For this purpose amendments to the *Law on Gender Equality* have been prepared, as well as the *Decision on establishing the fund for the advancement of women at the national¹² and local level*. Women's organisations of civil society will not give up on this initiative, as indicators of the actual inequality of women and men in Serbia point to the need for establishing such a fund.

Civil Society Focal Points (CSFP),¹³ which have since 2007 been conducting joint activities to reduce poverty and increased social inclusion of marginalised groups of citizens will continue to monitor budget execution, as well as the implementation of selected services and programmes of social protection aimed at 7 vulnerable groups: *children, women, youth, elderly, Roma, refugees and displaced persons and persons with disabilities*.

11 in accordance with Directive 2004/17/EC and Directive 2004/18/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004, as well as the latest Draft Directive on public procurement COM (2011) 896 final.

12 Available at <http://www.zafondzazene.rs/OdlukaOosnivanjuFondaRepublika.html>

13 For the issue of the position of seven marginalised groups appointed in 2007 by the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team as a mechanism for communication and exchange of information between the Team and other government institutions and civil society organisations. Through the CSFP mechanism over 600 civil society organisations have been actively included in various political processes in Serbia.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Serbia is in the process of harmonisation of laws and strategic documents with the EU *acquis communautaire*. Although further efforts are needed to achieve their full compliance, ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of laws and measures is the greatest challenge, which will continue to be topical in the future. For women who are (were) exposed to violence in an intimate partner relationship and/or family, and for their children, to understand the connection among violence, poverty and social exclusion, as well as an adequate policy for the protection from violence, discrimination prevention and equal opportunities, social protection policy, childcare, employment, housing and accessible justice are of vital importance, which is reflected in the offered solutions, but even more important is their consistent implementation.
2. Leading indicators point to the seriously difficult socio-economic situation, which disproportionately affects multiply discriminated population groups, including women, especially women exposed to violence in an intimate partner relationship and domestic violence. The economic crisis in Serbia has increased poverty and unemployment, which is particularly evident among the female population; on the other hand, the growing trend of working in the "grey economy" significantly increases the chances of exploitation and discrimination. Underdeveloped public services of childcare, care for the elderly and sick family members affect women mostly, making them increasingly inactive population. Underdeveloped social housing policy leads women exposed to violence and their children at high risk of homelessness. Additional efforts and government accountability will be needed, as well as better understanding of the needs and better targeting of measures and resources to reduce poverty and social exclusion, particularly in relation to the Roma women, women with disabilities, elderly and rural women, refugee and displaced women and single mothers and women victims of violence.
3. Although access to justice is guaranteed, the slowness of judicial procedures, inadequate enforcement and lack of effective system of free legal aid are a cause of serious concern for the realisation of rights, especially of the poorest and multiply vulnerable population groups, including many women and women victims of violence in an intimate relationship or in the family. Laws and strategies that regulate the prohibition of discrimination and gender equality are still without visible results in practice. It is necessary to strengthen the capacities of independent national bodies established to protect the rights of citizens and equality, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the existing laws. It is also necessary to take more comprehensive measures to inform citizens about their rights, as well as additional measures of support for the realisation of rights, especially when it comes to discrimination in the treatment of employees in public institutions and discrimination in the labour market.
4. The experiences of women who are (were) exposed to violence in an intimate partner relationship and/or family point to multiple vulnerability, developed fears and feelings of helplessness, especially when they belong to groups of women who are unemployed, of lower education, from villages and/or of underdeveloped regions of Serbia, without ownership of the house/apartment. These women often lack the understanding and support of the primary family, friends and community, which is the reason they stay in abusive relationships for a long time. However, the greatest cause for concern is the lack of understanding and avoidance of accountability of public servants, who are responsible for dealing with situations of domestic violence, as well as the lack of appropriate services and integrated interventions. At the same time, the system has not yet established the standards of conduct, as well as an effective appeal mechanism and internal and independent monitoring of work of civil servants, which makes the position of these women even more hopeless.

5. The analysis of legislation and strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia, relevant for the exercise of women's rights, protection from domestic violence and social inclusion has pointed to two key shortcomings: first, their gender insensitivity has been identified in terms of insufficient recognition of women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights, which should be corrected urgently in the future and, second, which is even more alarming, the absence of a coherent framework for implementing and reporting on the implementation of laws and a large number of national strategies. Looking at the social issues, the position and needs of women who are (were) exposed to violence, especially those from multiply marginalised groups, as well as the solutions present in the EU member states, a series of recommendations has been developed for improving the situation in Serbia in relation to legislation, as well as measures and activities from strategic documents. In an effort to adopt and consistently apply these recommendations and to improve the current situation, the willingness of decision makers will be necessary, but also a significant effort of women's civil society organisations.
6. The analysed situation and insight into the legal and strategic documents provided an opportunity for immediate interventions of the Autonomous Women's Centre and women's organisations that collaborated in the project *Towards Social Cohesion - influencing social inclusion policy for multiply marginalised groups of women and victims of violence*. A series of proposals has been made for amendments to legislation in the areas of protection from violence, social welfare, free legal aid, but a much more effort will be required for the state to accept full responsibility for compliance with international standards in these areas. The proposals for changes to local decisions on social protection have also been developed in relation to financial assistance, social housing, exemption from payment of housing and communal services, regulation of shelter accommodation of women and children victims of domestic violence. The first successes, the adoption of these proposals for the territory of Belgrade has added impetus to efforts for similar solutions to be adopted in Novi Sad, Vranje and Užice, and other towns in Serbia.
7. All the above mentioned provides the possibility for women's civil society organisations from Serbia to, based on the analysis and initiatives created in this project, be more actively involved in the reviewing local conditions and needs of women exposed to violence, as well as multiply marginalised groups of women, and to initiate changes in the local policies of social protection, employment, childcare, housing and accessible justice, but also in other areas important for women, such as health and education. This is an opportunity for the women's organisations to be more actively engaged in independent monitoring of implementation of laws and the strategic objectives and activities, as well as in the entire process of Serbia's EU accession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for improving protection of women from violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- It is essential that the Republic of Serbia urgently ratifies the *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* and withdraws reservations over the provisions of Article 30 Paragraph 2 and Article 44 paragraphs 1d, 3 and 4 of the Convention.
- Ratify the *European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes*, which the Republic of Serbia signed in October 2010.
- Monitor the implementation of the *European Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*, ratified by the Republic of Serbia in July 2010.
- Criminal and legal protection of victims of gender-based violence needs to be improved in line with the ratified international instruments and strategic documents adopted at the national level.
- Harmonise definitions of a family member in the Criminal Code and Family Law, particularly in relation to the protection of former spouses who do not live in the same household (without children), as well as in relation to the former common-law partners, regardless of whether they live in the same household.
- Amend legislation in order to exclude the possibility of mitigating punishment for perpetrators of all crimes against sexual freedom, and equal protection under criminal and family legislation.
- Introduce changes to the definitions of certain criminal offenses (rape, sexual intercourse or the act equated with sexual intercourse, encouraging prostitution, introduction of definitions of child abuse and neglect).
- Introduce new criminal offenses (stalking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation), and new security measures, and tighten the punishment for certain criminal offenses.
- Rule out the possibility for criminal offenses against sexual freedom to be prosecuted upon complaint.
- Adopt amendments that guarantee financial compensation for victims of criminal offenses; use the possibility of the court that in the verdict finding the defendant guilty, decide on satisfying the claim for indemnification of the authorized person fully, or partially. It is essential that the Republic of Serbia recognises the right to compensation to the victims in cases of severe injury and/or murder, as well as to dependent family members, and the right to compensation in cases where the state or its representatives have not acted in accordance with statutory powers.
- Introduce protection for social workers, the same as officials have.
- Ensure that two authorised state bodies, public prosecution and guardianship authority initiate proceedings in lawsuits for the protection from domestic violence, so that a larger number of identified victims are provided adequate protection from violence.
- Amend the provision on the delivery of judgment to measures of protection from domestic violence as the court obligation to deliver the judgement, besides the guardianship authority, to the police in order to improve the monitoring of the criminal offense of domestic violence.

- The guardianship authority should be obliged to, apart from keeping records on the persons that experienced violence, develop a plan of the use of social services for this category of persons, including other community services, in accordance with the principle of social protection.
- It is essential that the new *Strategy on Social Welfare* includes women as subjects of rights, vulnerable groups of women, including women victims of gender-based violence and their children. In the shortest time possible, the new strategy should have the action plan for its implementation. A mechanism for monitoring and reporting on implementation of planned measures should be foreseen, given the wide range of institutions responsible for the implementation of this strategy.
- Particular attention should be paid to services under the jurisdiction of local governments, such as immediate intervention services, SOS telephones, cross-sectoral coordinated planning of services at different levels, protocols on cooperation between institutions and organisations in the protection of victims of violence. Budget allocations and the effects of application of these services should be monitored, as well as the support that local government provides for specialised women's organisations that provide support to women and children victims of violence.
- Follow the good practice example of the *Provincial Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality* in the provision of support for the establishment of a single toll-free number for victims of violence in the territory of AP Vojvodina, implemented by SOS Network of Vojvodina (5 women's organisations with experience in this type of service).
- It is necessary to develop a quality system of monitoring and reporting on implementation of the planned strategic objectives and activities for the implementation of the *Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Intimate Partner Relationship*, as well as periodic assessment of the effects of these activities. Reports on the activities, spent budget and donation funds, and their effects, should be made publicly available.
- It is recommended to start the procedure of accession of the Republic of Serbia to Daphne III – programme to prevent and combat violence against children, youth and women and to protect victims and groups at risk.
- It is necessary to ensure full implementation of the existing systemic solutions (strategies and protocols) to protect women from violence, through:
 - continuous expansion of awareness on the unacceptability of violence against women (and children) and increased availability of information on the protection and services, especially for multiply discriminated groups of women;
 - support and involvement of all social actors, decision makers and government institutions and civil society, public, media and individuals in the prevention of violence against women and violence against children;
 - creation of a coordinated approach in order to prevent and protect victims of domestic violence;
 - allocation of appropriate budget resources to achieve planned measures;
 - continuous training and application of acquired knowledge and skills in the daily work of professionals in order to maintain the results achieved and to ensure involvement of all stakeholders;
 - clearer definition of responsibilities and procedures (implementation of the *General Protocol on the treatment and cooperation of institutions, agencies and organisations in situations of violence against women in intimate relationship*, and the adoption of specific protocols), as well as the process of monitoring the compliance of the foreseen measures;

- o developed draft of a single database on domestic violence, in order to ensure more precise understanding of the phenomenon and the conduct of institutions.
- It is necessary to improve the strategic framework for protecting children from abuse, neglect and domestic violence, as well as to introduce *girls* as subjects of rights, in accordance with international documents, since their vulnerability and the experience of violence differs from that of boys. It is necessary to ensure full implementation of strategic documents for the protection of children and regular reporting on the measures and effects.
- Although the protection of children has been improved by the adoption of specific protocols for the protection of children from abuse and neglect, intersectoral cooperation is not satisfactory, and the reaction the competent institutions and the available data are insufficient, and should be improved.
- It is necessary to take further efforts to protect children from domestic violence, in a way that will enable better protection of their mothers (non-violent parents). It is necessary to:
 - o improve coordination among relevant institutions and bodies involved in the child protection system, including regular organisation of case conferences, in order to better evaluate the risks and plan measures of protection;
 - o establish a mechanism for monitoring the institutional and judicial processes and the application of the existing legal provisions which require special protection of juvenile offenders and juvenile victims;
 - o develop understanding of the risks and harmful effects of exposure to / witnessing domestic violence and violence between parents, as well as knowledge of specific forms of violence against children, which is a function of punishment and violence against the wife / partner, i.e. mother of the children.
- It is necessary to ensure sufficient and stable financial resources (budgetary allocations) for support services to victims, as well as the financing of independent women's organisations specialised in supporting women with experience of male violence.

Recommendations for improving policies in the field of childcare and social support for women exposed to violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- In order to ensure alimony payment, it is necessary to amend the *draft Civil Code* (Part III – Family Relations), *Criminal Code* and *Law on Enforcement and Security*, as well as other relevant regulations: provide for the possibility of collection of alimony through an institution that would monitor the execution of the obligation to alimony determined by the executive court decision or executive settlement before the court or other competent authority.
- The right to child allowance is necessary to reassess, first of all, related to small nominal amounts per beneficiary, as well as its effects in protecting the poorest categories of beneficiaries. In addition to increasing the amount of child allowance (which would not necessarily mean the contribution to financial support for individual beneficiaries), it is necessary to seek other solutions to protect the poor better.
- It is necessary to provide sufficient capacities and affordable services to preschool institutions.
- The structure of the preschool service beneficiaries should be examined and target interventions appropriately and significantly increase the coverage of children of single parents and children from poor families, including children and women who are (were)

exposed to violence in order for the rights and needs of the children to be realised and objectives of preschool education achieved.

- It is necessary to adapt working hours of preschool institutions with changed demands of the labour market, particularly in relation to the needs of single parents, including childcare services on weekends or at night.
- Given that the scope of services for older persons and persons with disabilities in community is still low and unsatisfactory, and the support programmes for primary, kinship and foster families are developed insufficiently to include children with disabilities, it is necessary to encourage development of non-institutional protection.
- Public procurement in the field of social protection should also meet the requirements of a social nature, i.e. to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and include specific conditions regarding the execution of the contracts that may include requirements of a social nature.
- The disputed provision in the *Law on Social Welfare* should be reassessed, according to which all beneficiaries of financial assistance are obliged to file claims for kinship support, even in situations where the alimony debtor also beneficiary of financial assistance, unemployed or of unknown residence, because in this way, the poorest citizens are imposed with additional obligations, and courts are loaded with cases.
- It is necessary to amend *local decisions on rights and social protection services* with the extended right to financial support for the women who suffered domestic violence.
- Along with the financial assistance, it is essential that centres for social work, in accordance with their competences, develop an individual plan of integrated services in collaboration with other relevant institutions and service providers, which has to be in line with the principles of social protection and rights of beneficiaries.
- Interconnection of services (health and social, social with employment programmes, and education with social, health and employment programmes) should become one of the key tasks in order to meet the complex needs of poor and socially marginalised groups (which unequally affects women in each of these groups, due to the traditional links between the role of women in caring for dependent family members – children, elderly and disabled people).
- It is necessary to improve the strategic framework for the protection of children from poverty, and particularly the level of coordination of relevant institutions and bodies involved in the childcare system, as well as the protection mechanisms. It is necessary to prepare another report on the implementation of NPA for children (for the period July 2009–2011) and data on the effects of activities should be made publicly available.
- It is necessary to improve the text of the *Law on Basic Education System* so that women are explicitly included as subjects of rights, in accordance with the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality.
- It is necessary to provide a broader introduction of optional forms of daycares in schools for children under 12 so that the parents, especially mothers, are provided with childcare while on work..
- It is essential that schools (and not just parents) provide much more support for the development and teaching of children, especially children from socially deprived groups or families faced with crises, including children exposed to/witnessed violence against their mothers.
- In order to prevent violence against women, it is necessary to introduce knowledge about the problem of violence against women in educational programmes at all levels. Educational programmes and materials for elementary and high schools should be improved by introducing a gender dimension: gender-sensitive language and statistics; explanations of gender roles; equal representation of women in professions; contents on the reproductive rights of women, etc.

Recommendations for improving policies in the field of employment, labour and income for women exposed to violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- It is necessary to develop appropriate resources in order to predict adequate measures of active employment policy, and initiate new ones, adapted to real needs of the labour market, where women would be included in proportion to their level of unemployment.
- Active employment policy measures should include incentives for pluralist and inclusive economy and the promotion of socially responsible business activities, in order to encourage companies to employ women from disadvantaged social groups, including women victims of domestic violence.
- It is necessary to ensure that women's participation in active labour market programmes should be proportional to their share in registered unemployment. It is therefore important to promote gender sensitivity in monitoring active programmes aimed at increasing the efficiency of resources, especially to increase the relative share of the training programmes in active labour market programmes.
- It is essential that the data on the number of employed persons by applying benefits related to payment of contributions and taxes are gender segregated, in order to monitor the effect of these measures on women.
- Special attention within active labour market programmes should be paid to single parents and parents with lower level of education.
- It is necessary to create affirmative measures of education, retraining and employment for women who were exposed to violence and who started an independent life, which include systematic psychological and legal support and information provision to potential beneficiaries and employers. Special programmes and training should be created that meet the needs of multiply disadvantaged groups of women – women with disabilities, Roma women, older women, etc.
- Implement training and informational events in companies and in the workplace, and within the specialised centres that provide support to women exposed to violence or violence survivors.
- Initiate implementation of standards for the identification of various forms of discrimination in employment and during work, as well as effective mechanisms to prevent and penalise discrimination.
- It is necessary to develop different forms of incentives for employers who hire and keep older women at work, as well as women from other marginalised groups, including women exposed to violence.
- By developing new integrated services, especially at the local level, and encouraging cooperation between different institutions, it is necessary to motivate unemployed women for productive employment, including employment in social enterprises.
- All the measures related to the principle of flexicurity (especially flexible working hours and work from home) should be directed to the employment of single mothers in order to ensure their better access to the labour market and facilitate employment.
- It should be systematically monitored how flexible forms of employment and representation of part-time jobs influence the level of salary, career development, prospects for progress and the amount of pension, and any long term adverse effects caused by the models of "harmonising work and private life" for women and prevent them.
- The huge gap in using the right to leave for family reasons between men and women should be reassessed and it is essential to create measures that are encouraging (and binding) for both parents to use these rights more equally, with more balanced share of family responsibilities.

- The activities undertaken by the state should be systematically monitored, including local governments on establishing a better, more available and flexible system of public care for children and the elderly, in order to free the potential of women in the labour market, which is particularly important for single mothers, women that have walked out from abusive relationships and other multiply marginalised groups of women.
- It is important that reports on the effectiveness of programmes and activities of the National Employment Service also include the report on the activities and results of “the team for achieving the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities in the labour market” and the “team of trainers in the field of gender equality”.
- It is essential that the *Law on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities* recognises women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights.
- It is necessary to improve the solutions in the *Labour Law*, to protect women from violence and abuse in the workplace, in accordance with the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality.
- Given that the *Law on the Prevention of Abuse at Work* does not recognise women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights, it is necessary to prescribe that the Law provisions contain special measures to protect women, in accordance with the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality.
- Legal solutions should elaborate the role of labour inspection, as well as the role of trade unions in order to minimise the potential for gender discrimination and more efficiently monitor implementation of the existing regulations.
- Educational programmes and materials in the system of higher education must include gender perspective, gender-sensitive language and relevant literature dealing with gender issues as well as critical reflection on the material in textbooks.
- It is necessary to revise the *Strategy on Development of Vocational Education* and the action plan for its implementation and explicitly include women, girls and young women as subjects of rights. It is necessary to prepare a report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the implementation of vocational education, with gender-segregated data.
- It is necessary to introduce measures to encourage young pregnant women to continue their education, to enable them to obtain appropriate qualifications and to maximise their chances for decent working conditions, better paid jobs and financial independence.
- It is necessary to adopt the *Law on Adult Education*, where women would be recognised as a special target group.
- Although the government adopted the Action plan for implementation of the *Adult Education Strategy 2009–2010*, there is still no report on the implementation, so it is difficult to monitor effects of measures and activities envisaged by the Strategy. In this regard, it is necessary to introduce a mechanism for regular reporting, as well as gender-segregated data presentation.
- Ensure that all programmes of monitoring, evaluation and researching in the areas of employment, labour and income are gender sensitive.

Recommendations for improving policies in the field of social housing for women exposed to violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- Since the Action Plan for implementing the *National Strategy for Social Housing* recognises neither women, vulnerable groups of women nor category of people who suffer domestic violence and shelters beneficiaries, this should be corrected.
- It is necessary to conduct regular monitoring of the housing situation of various vulnerable groups, including women and vulnerable groups of women such as single mothers and women victims of violence. It is essential that the data based on which the housing indicators are analysed are collected in accordance with the elements as foreseen by indicators of the European Union for monitoring social exclusion in the field of housing.
- It is essential that reports on social services related to housing services, particularly family accommodation and accommodation in shelters, contain information on the number of women and children victims of violence who were beneficiaries of these services (how many women used this service, for how long and other support services obtained along with the accommodation service).
- All the accommodation services for women (and their children) victims should be free, regardless of their employment status.
- Along the accommodation services for women and children victims of violence it is necessary to provide other services, including training, employment assistance, legal and psychosocial support, in order to find durable solutions and full emancipation of women.
- It is necessary to monitor and report on the use of the habitation right – *habitatío* – for the child and the parent who exercises the parental right in an apartment owned by the other parent, and information about this legal option should be made available to women, including victims of domestic violence.
- It is necessary to form groups for representation and self-representation of rights of people in a situation of homelessness, which would define priorities and act in terms of policy changes.
- It is necessary to develop the ways to recognise the risk of homelessness, including violence against women as a risk, and the strategy document should incorporate measures to reduce homelessness.
- It is necessary to establish a uniform system of records on persons in the state of homelessness at the national level in order to map the existing needs.
- It is necessary to develop an efficient system of social housing, sufficient capacities for temporary accommodation in shelters for adults and the elderly, evaluate the existing system of support (shelter capacity, cost of services, analysis of possible alternative forms of accommodation).
- The local decisions on rights and social services should expand the circle of beneficiaries of social housing in supportive environment to include women who suffered domestic violence.
- It is essential that all local documents (decisions, rule books) precisely regulate accommodation of women and children victims of domestic violence in shelters/safe houses, as well as all issues related to housing (social housing, subsidies for housing and utilities).

Recommendations for improving policies in the field of accessible justice for women exposed to violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- It is necessary to standardise the conduct procedures of public services (especially police and centres for social work, where women victims of violence first and most often turn to for help), to ensure adequate provision of information and all available interventions and services, as well as guidance on appropriate institutions and organisations that provide assistance. These services should develop efficient and impartial internal systems for appeal of beneficiaries and monitoring of work of its employees.
- It is necessary to revise the text of the *National Judicial Reform Strategy* and Action Plan, so that women and vulnerable groups of women like women victims of violence are recognised as subjects of rights.
- Since there is no report on the implementation of the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy, it is difficult to monitor the effects of measures and activities envisaged by the Strategy, and the urgent development of the report should resolve this lack.
- In terms of the free legal aid system in Serbia, the revision of the text of the Strategy and Action Plan is recommended, so that women and particularly vulnerable groups of women such as women victims of violence are recognised as subjects of rights and in order to recognise all providers of free legal aid (legal clinics and civil society organisations besides bar associations and local government units).
- It is necessary to reduce the length of proceedings for a criminal offense of domestic violence before the public prosecution and courts, in accordance with the right to trial within a reasonable time, as one of the basic human rights.
- It is necessary to ensure that the public prosecutor, as an authorised body, parallel with instigating criminal proceedings, files civil suits for the issuance of protection measures from domestic violence.
- In the proceedings for the protection from domestic violence it is necessary to largely use two legal institutes: exemption from the previous payment of litigation costs and appointing free legal representative of the prosecutor/plaintiffs as a way of exercising the right to access the court, i.e. the right to legal protection.
- It is necessary to consistently ensure that the plaintiffs, victims of domestic violence, exercise their right to reimbursement of the proceedings.
- It is necessary to consistently respect the principle of special urgency proceedings for protection from domestic violence, in terms of scheduling the first hearing, reducing the number of hearings and reducing delays of hearing, by more efficient provision of documentation from the relevant services (primarily from the police and centres for social work), as well as more efficient delivery of calls and appeals.
- It is necessary to improve the efficiency of execution of court judgments.

Recommendations for improving policies in the field of reducing discrimination against multiply marginalised groups of women and women exposed violence in intimate partner relationships and domestic violence

- Although the *Anti-discrimination Law* recognises women and certain vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights, it is necessary to amend the text of the Law to include women victims of violence as subjects of rights.

- It is necessary to monitor implementation of the *Law on Gender Equality* through regular reports for each area the law applies.
- It is necessary to amend the text of the Law on Gender Equality in order to foresee for establishing a budgetary fund for the empowerment of women as a special evidential account in the budget of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the budgets of local governments.
- Funds from the “Fund for Women” should be used to mitigate the effects of inequality between women and men, in particular for: combating domestic violence, economic empowerment of women, protecting women’s health, promoting women’s participation in public and cultural life, promoting education of women, encouraging women to scientific work and ensuring equal treatment of sexes in the development and funding of sporting activities, with the special emphasis on supporting multiply marginalised groups of women in order to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion.
- It is necessary to correct a systemic flaw in the field of gender equality, which refers to the slow implementation of the *National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality (2009)*, and its action plan (2010), as well as other strategies that include provisions on gender equality. The lack of reports on the implementation of this strategy should be urgently corrected.
- Since the *Law on the Prevention of Discrimination against People with Disabilities* does not recognise women and vulnerable groups of women as subjects of rights, the given flaw needs to be corrected.
- It is necessary to revise the text of the *Strategy for Improving the Situation of Persons with Disabilities* so that, as subjects of rights, it explicitly recognises doubly discriminated women – women with disabilities victims of violence. Although the Strategy was adopted in 2007, the action plan for its implementation has not yet been adopted, and thus this should be urgently corrected.
- In the field of youth policy it is necessary to ensure proper implementation and monitoring of measures, including setting clear objectives and indicators, given that the report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the *National Youth Strategy* from 2009 does not provide details on the effects of the project implementation.
- It is necessary to revise the text of the National Youth Strategy and Action Plan so that young women victims of violence are recognised explicitly as subjects of rights.
- It is necessary to revise the text of the *National Strategy on Ageing*, so that older women victims of violence are identified as subjects of rights. Since the action plan for implementation of this strategy has never been adopted, it is necessary to urgently initiate the process of creation and adoption of the action plan.
- Although the Action Plan for the implementation of *Strategies for Improving the Situation of Roma* was adopted in 2009, additional funds are required as well as increased use of regulations and policies in order to feel the effects on the field.
- It is necessary to update the *Strategy for Fighting Human Trafficking* and the National Action Plan adopted in 2009 in order to respond better to current trends and to enhance cooperation between the police and judiciary; it is necessary to prepare a comprehensive report on the action plan implementation.
- It is necessary to start revising the *Strategy for Encouraging Births* and adopt the action plan for its implementation, in order to ensure efficient implementation of population policy measures. At the same time, population policy measures in no way should jeopardise the reproductive rights of women and the state’s obligations in this area.
- In the future it is necessary to put additional efforts to implementation of the Action Plan for the application of *Sustainable Development Strategy 2009–2017*, since some of the planned activities have not been realised (e.g. “introduction of subsidies for expenditure related to the care and raise of children of particularly vulnerable categories”).



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