



## Stability Pact Gender Task Force Report to Regional Table Meeting Prague, November 15, 2005

### Introduction

Since the last Regional Table Meeting in Sofia the SPGTF has undertaken two new projects, in addition to the ongoing implementation of the SEE Regional Women's Parliamentary Exchange Project. In addition to these activities, the Gender Task Force has had the unique opportunity to formally link itself to the newly established **ICFTU-WCL CEE&NIS Women's Network**.

### Organizing the Regional Trade Union

From September 28<sup>th</sup> - October 1<sup>st</sup> the Stability Pact Gender Task Force 12 member SEE Regional delegation participated in the recent **Sixth International Trade Union Women's School on International and European Gender and Social Standards**<sup>1</sup>, held in Ohrid, R. Macedonia. The Sixth Trade Union School offered a unique opportunity for a number of the GTF's Civil Society and Parliamentary Partners to interact with prominent trade union women activists from 24 transition countries as well as European and Global Labour Organizations. One important outcome of the school was the decision on the part of two large trade union women's networks to unite, in advance of the global unification of their umbrella trade union organizations, **ICFTU** (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and **WCL** (World Confederation of Labor). The SPGTF was amongst the first to congratulate this new women's network representing 43 women's structures of trade union confederations from 24 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States, which includes more than 25 million trade union women members. The ICFTU-WCL CEE&NIS Women's Network adopted a **"DECLARATION ON GLOBALISATION AND FAIR TRANSITION FOR WORKING FAMILIES"** as a position paper of the new network. Likewise, the SPGTF cooperated officially with the new ICFTU-WCL CEE&NIS Women's Network by signing an Agreement of Cooperation in Ohrid, on October 1, 2005. The agreement foresees a close cooperation and exchange of expertise in fields of common interest, in particular gender equality and social dialogue.

### Trade Union Women's Empowerment in Serbia

The Serbian Social Dialogue & Trade Union Women's Empowerment Project held a **"Train the Trainers"** seminar in August. This Italian Government funded project is based on methodology developed in the GTF Projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro 2003-2004. The "Train the trainers" Seminar prepared six (6) Trade Union trainers from two main Serbian Trade Union Confederations, *Nezavisnost* and *SSS Serbia*, to then hold eight (8) seminars for Trade Unionists from the Education, Healthcare, Public Administration, Chemical and Textile Trade Union Branches in eight (8) cities (Subotica, Smederevo Zrenjanin, Pirot, Užice, **Niš**, Vranje, and Šabac). This stage of project implementation will be completed by the beginning of November. They will be followed by a National Strategic Seminar for coordination of social dialogue in Serbia on an issue of specific concern to women workers. In 2006, the project will continue with concrete negotiations with authorities for improving working conditions for women workers.

<sup>1</sup> The GTF, through the Italian Government Donation earmarked for Trade Union Women's Empowerment, was one of the donors.



## The Empowerment Roma Women

The GTF continued its work on the Empowerment of Roma Women in SEE. The GTF "*Regional Roma Women Can Do It II*" Project is funded by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. 10 national meetings took place to gather prominent Roma Activists and Officials as well as Parliamentary and Government Officials responsible for Minority and Roma Rights. At these meetings Roma women activists appointed two Roma Facilitators to implement the GTF Project nationally. A two-day meeting of prominent ROMA women followed these National meetings from 10 SEE Countries and territories in Ohrid, R. Macedonia. 22 Roma women and 10 GTF representatives met on October 2-3 2005 to enable Roma women to decide about the substance and partners in the forthcoming project phases and coordinate the project implementation at national level. The basis for discussions during the meeting were the National Roma Action Plans, which SEE countries adopted on Roma Inclusion as part of the Decade of Roma (2005-2015) as well as presentations from Roma Women Representatives in **IRWN** (International Roma Women's Network) and **ERTF** (European Roma and Travellers Forum). During this Regional meeting participants undertook Strategic Planning for National Conferences, and opinions and ideas were exchanged. One overall conclusion was that existing Roma National Plans, despite the fact that in most cases they included Roma and in particular Roma Women in their preparation, lack an awareness of the different needs of Roma Women and Men, hence, on their own, are likely to reinforce gender discrimination. By the end of 2005, 10 National Conferences will take place to identify a specific gender sensitive area of concern to the Roma community. This issue will be the basis for the specific advocacy and lobbying campaigns of Roma and Non Roma women and men throughout 2006.

## Parliamentary Cooperation

The Stability Pact Gender Task Force has organized the first Regional Women's Parliamentary Workshop within the German Foreign Ministry funded by **SEE Women MP Exchange 2005-2006 Project, October 28-29<sup>th</sup>, in the Croatian Parliament Building, Zagreb, Croatia**. The main subject of this meeting was "**Reconciliation between Work and Family**". Under this heading, twelve MP's from nine SEE Parliaments and a number of parliamentary and government experts examined various models and practices in South Eastern Europe and in EU Member States. Expertise was provided by **Marijana Grandits**, Director, Stability Pact Working Table One, **Petra Blaess**, Stability Pact Expert on Parliamentary Cooperation, **Sonja Lokar**, Chair of the Gender Task Force, and **Violeta Neubauer**, Slovenian Government Expert on Gender Equality.

This project builds upon past experiences by integrating thorough parliamentary preparations and their follow-up prior to each of the two Regional Workshops: The GTF consultation with the Speakers of parliament and relevant and prominent committee members, preparatory parliamentary hearings or meetings prior to each workshop, and specialized follow-up meetings or hearings after each workshop undertaken by the parliaments themselves. All of these interventions aim to assist Parliaments to integrate a Gender sensitive approach in the ongoing process of the harmonization of legislation according to EU standards.

## Other Developments and Conclusions

Recent elections in SEE have brought about mixed results in the improvements of women's representation in parliaments. Albania has made a slight improvement since the last elections in the representation of women, and, for the first time in Albanian History, a woman, Ms. Jozefina

Topalli, became Speaker of the Albanian Parliament. In Moldova, there has been significant



progress, while the situation in Bulgaria has diminished somewhat, but still remains above the European average of 18%.

**% of women MP's**

<i>Albania</i>	LAST ELECTIONS 5..8%	These elections: 7,8%
<i>Bulgaria</i>	LAST ELECTIONS 26.2 %	These elections: 22%
<i>Moldova</i>	LAST ELECTIONS 12.9%	These elections: 21.7%

In 2005, the SPGTF continues to initiate positive developments in gender equality in SEE. The recent strategic partnership established with the 25 million members' strong ICFTU-WCL CEE&NIS Women's Network is an important indicator of the relevance of building synergetic partnerships with other European networks and institutions. The Gender Task Force remains dedicated to advancing gender-balanced sustainable development in South Eastern Europe through three priority areas:

**1. Active Women's Citizenship / Political Empowerment / Cross Border Activity**

Targeting EURO Regions in SEE, Post Conflict areas, Roma and Minority Women, grassroots outreach, local democracy, etc.

**2. Engendering Key Polices**

Economic, social, security policy: establishing and strengthening Social Dialogue, poverty reduction, refugee integration, etc.

**3. Strengthening Gender Equality Machinery**

Improving the governmental AND PARLIAMENTARY framework for progress towards gender equality and European integration.