

External evaluation report on the project "Coordinated efforts - Toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence"

Summary

The subject of this evaluation is the second phase of the Project "**Coordinated efforts - toward new European standards in protection of women from gender based violence**", that was implemented from December 2014 - December 2016 by Autonomous Women's Center together with six partner organizations¹. It is EU funded, CSF FPA Action aiming to contribute to establishing comprehensive legal and policy solutions for protection of women against gender-based violence in the Western Balkans. Framework for the Action was Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Its **specific objective** was to strengthen capacities of women's organizations and networks in 4 Western Balkan (WB) countries for analysis, monitoring and advocacy in the area of protection of women from gender based violence, through long-term regional cooperation and learning from EU experience. The Action **directly targeted women**, GBV survivors and beneficiaries of women's CSOs, while the main **target audience** included national and local women's CSOs, as well as respective national and local decision makers (governments and parliaments; institutions-police, judiciary, social protection; media; IRB and similar).

The Action and its external evaluation was organized around three **Results areas**: a) The dialogue between women's organizations networks and key decision makers on the harmonization of national regulations CoE Convention; b) Strengthening capacities of local women's organizations, monitoring of respective state measure and social inclusion at the local level; c) Establishing system for comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of legal and policy solutions related to CoE Convention. The **purpose** of the evaluation was to create independent and objective assessment of the quality of the Action's activities, results and applied methodology, but limited to the Action implemented in Croatia, BiH and Slovenia.

Key evaluation findings verified that the **Action was fully implemented** in accordance with its original plan, **achieving expected results on the very high level**. More specifically, Analysis of the Action objectives, expected results and activities demonstrates **high level of strategic coherence**. The Action was strategically well planned with multi-layered approach on the level of results. Also, the **Action relevance appears to be very high** as the prevalence of GBV in the Region is high and still prevention, prosecution, access to services and particularly Governments' commitment to adequate budgetary allocations remain problematic. From the perspective of its effectiveness, the Action has **strongly contributed in combating gender-based violence** by influencing creation of **more favourable legal framework** and comprehensive **system for monitoring** of the implementation of the CoE Convention. Also, the Action positively contributed to **women CSOs to become more effective, knowledgeable and credible partners and resource** in increasing the awareness about GBV and fighting it.

It is recognized that the Project reached some **real achievements** to be **able to sustain** after the Project end. In Croatia, the project managed to keep the GBV topic in public focus, although without getting the Convention to become the State institutionalized framework for the actions yet, some relevant laws were improved. Furthermore, the Convention ratification has been recently publicly announced by Croatia Prime Minister. BiH managed to mobilize wide range of actors and put on place solid legal and institutional framework for combating violence against women, in spite of very complex and politically unstable environment. Slovenia already has very functional system on place. However, overall GBV related implementation practices, including financial sustainability **remain weak and inefficient**. **Governments' role to sustain progress achieved and develop it further is crucial**. Still, far more political

¹ Association SOS Help Line for Women and Children – Victims of Violence, Slovenia; Centre for Women War Victims, Croatia; United Women, BiH; Women's Safe House, Montenegro; National Council for Gender Equality, Macedonia and Women Against Violence Europe Network, Austria.



and financial support has to be put in place. Further on, this Action demonstrated that Government and respective institutions officials' **perception on CSOs role and capacities has been changing in positive direction.** The introduction and implementation of **monitoring tools and indicators for the CoE Convention** seems to be one of the best parts of this Project, replicable in other European countries. Advocacy activities and related campaigns were recognized as **very** successful. **Efficiency** of the Action was extremely high within all aspects. The Project team **outstanding commitment** and **high professionalism** turned to be the winning both in terms of efficient implementations practices, but more than that in creation of functional and hopefully **sustainable regional partnership.**

Key recommendations gained from the evaluation process are as follows: AWC and partners organizations should **Keep working together on the regional level** in order to preserve and utilize capital and recognition gained through the successful implementation of Action throughout the Region; **Promotion of achieved results, sharing huge knowledge and experience** should be maintained and reproduced wider **as best practices**; While considering continuation of the Action on the regional level, besides work on favourable legal framework, it would be important to pay more attention to **filling in the gaps identified within the Action** (local implementation, interdisciplinary cooperation of institutions, systematic monitoring, additional comparative analyses...). It is recommended that **Government structures and decision makers should remain in focus** as the key agents of the changes needed to be done. Additionally, it is noted as important that **Maintaining and improving dialog with EU institutions and organizations** is also needed in the future (WAVE and other similar EU organizations/networks, CoE GREVIO mechanism, EUDS...) with the purpose to strengthen the influence on relevant actors in the region, but also to channel rich Balkans CSOs experience to reach other European countries. Within **management lessons learnt** it is noted that it could be useful for AWC and partners project team to revisit own internal practices. It is recommended that the basic principles of the obvious '**wining model**' **should be preserved** (successfully created balance between tasks and relations among team members, trust and mutual support). Some space for improvements relates to: **simplification of project monitoring and reporting procedures; balancing scope and number of activities** within timeline given and human resources available. The same refers to setting up indicator and targets to be used.

