

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

December 2014 – December 2016

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 (II phase, 2015-2016)

The achievements in the implementation of the Action have considerably contributed to the realisation of the *overall objective*<sup>1</sup>. **Three of four** WB countries **and Slovenia** have ratified the CoE Convention against violence against women and domestic violence. **Croatia** started the process of ratification following the [statement of the Prime Minister](#). In FYROM almost all the key actors (in the parliament and the responsible ministries) agree that the ratification of the Convention is the next step<sup>2</sup>.

In the period 2015-2016, **34.6% of proposals** for amendments to the laws and policies were adopted, developed by women's CSOs. All partner organisations invested enormous effort in the preparation of proposals and advocating changes in laws and policies in accordance with the standards of the Convention. Good communication was developed with key decision makers. Owing to their credibility and expertise, representatives of organisations were *members of working groups* for amendments to the law (Slovenia and Serbia), or were preparing amendments that were adopted (B&H, Montenegro, Croatia). Significant achievements were made in maintaining a dialogue with a large number (at least 280) of key decision-makers and associates, advocating for change, visibility of the CoE Convention and activities of women's CSOs.

However, there was not any increase recorded in the funds allocated from **the budget to support victims of GBV**. On the contrary, there was a reduction of funds in B&H, Serbia and Croatia. Slovenia is an **example of good practice**: there was **10.3%** more funds allocated from the national budget for services to victims of GBV (80% of which was allocated to the specialised CSOs). The results in advocating for the improvement of the existing and establishing new **specialised services** for victims of violence were partially achieved: national SOS helpline was established in Montenegro (2015); plan for establishing a national SOS helpline has been adopted, and piloting crisis centres for victims of sexual violence was initiated in Serbia (2016); in Slovenia a program for victims with disabilities was established, including the possibility of accommodation (2015). Only Slovenia (2015) and Serbia (2016) recorded an increase in **financing specialised women's CSOs** that support GBV victims<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Overall objective: *establishment of comprehensive legal and policy solutions for protection against gender-based violence in the Western Balkans.*

<sup>2</sup> Due to the extremely complex political situation (during a long period), this issue is not on the agenda.

<sup>3</sup> In Serbia, the total amount of funds intended for specialised services of women's organisations is very small (€ 31,265 in 2016), and within the local budget it is available for only 8 organisations (out of the network comprised of 26 specialised



which was a direct contribution to the activities on this project. However in 2016, the shelter of the Autonomous Women's House (Croatia) was completely left out of funds from the state budget. Consequently, future advocacy activities of women's organisations in the region will be strongly focused on providing resources for specialised support to victims and the existence of specialised women's organisations as service providers. There were **4,309** beneficiaries directly supported and **24,900** information leaflets distributed. Between 95-100% of beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction with the provided services and information.

There was a certain progress recorded in **shortening procedures and a supportive approach** by professionals: an urgent procedure was introduced for protective measures in FB&H (24h) and in Serbia (48 hours, with the possibility of extension to 30 days); "specialisations" of professionals in the police and prosecution were introduced in Serbia; the *Law on the Protection of the Right to Trial within a Reasonable Time* was adopted, to reduce the inefficiency of the judiciary (Serbia, 2015). There was also disciplinary responsibility foreseen for the prosecutors and judges who failed to comply with the statutory deadlines (Serbia, 2016, upon the proposal of AWC). Monitoring the implementation of these provisions will be a challenge for the upcoming period.

**Joint campaigns** were visible and very successful (especially the one [realised in 2015](#)), with an estimated coverage of between **18.5% and 55%** of the citizens. Direct support from the citizens was received (**98,997** participated in the actions), from the media (**1,206** reports), as well as the acknowledgment from professional associations ([EU](#) and [Serbia](#)). It has become a good practice example in the implementation of the Convention (available on the web page of [Centre for Women, Peace and Security](#), London School of Economics and Political Science).

Our baseline studies and indicators for monitoring of the implementation of the CoE Convention [were recommended](#) by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe. [Online database](#) on the implementation of the Convention (the only one of its kind in the region, but also among the CoE member states) ensures reporting on the situation [related](#) in related to competent national bodies, international bodies (UN, CoE, EU), as well as [joint reports](#) of the coalition.

National and regional **networking** of (at least 260) women's CSOs was strengthened, as well as information exchange with the EU organisations. Our activities and contribution to the changes in the region were [awarded by the FPAs](#) platforms.

It will not be possible to continue to maintain such a large scope of activities, visibility and impact of the Convention without financial support to the partner coalition. However, a "common capital" was created to serve as the basis for further continuation of the existing and development of new activities. In the current and future political, social and economic context of the WB region and the EU, of crucial importance will be the affiliation of women's organisations, especially the continuous activities through joint projects. In this sense, the EC decision that directs all the gender policies funds on intergovernmental organisations (UN Women) is quite disappointing, since it hinders the continuation of a common partnership engagement of women's organisations from the region of WB and EU. In our opinion, it is a politically bad decision.

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organisations). The largest increase in funds received in the period between 2015 and 2016 is recorded in **four local partner organisations** (women's organisations from Vranje, Uzice, Kikinda and Novi Sad), which is a direct result of their advocacy, visibility and credibility, immensely contributed by their participation in this project.



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