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## **REPORT\***

### **“Protecting women against violence in the BSEC Member States”**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The BSEC Member States established the BSEC Organization “sharing the common vision of their regional cooperation as a part of the integration process in Europe, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity through economic liberty, social justice, and equal security and stability” and defined their areas of cooperation “with the aim of utilizing more effectively their human, natural and other resources for attaining a sustained growth of their national economies and the social well-being of their peoples” (BSEC Charter).

2. On the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Summit of BSEC, the Heads of State and Government reiterated their commitment to contribute to the attainment of UN Millennium Development Goals at national, regional and global levels and invited the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to examine possible steps for the achievement of these goals in the BSEC region.

3. Violence against women constitutes one of the biggest challenges to the advancement of gender equality and the protection of human rights. Violence affects the lives of millions of women worldwide, in all socio-economic and educational classes, cutting across cultural and religious barriers. It has a devastating impact on individuals, families, communities and countries and enormous social and economic costs globally, as well as for the BSEC region. It impedes the contribution of women to development, peace and security, and poses a serious threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC has discussed an aspect of the problem in its Report and Recommendation (35/1999) on “The Legal Framework for Combating Trafficking in People”. It also discussed the issue of “Women’s Participation in the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Life and adopted relevant Report and Recommendation (61/2002). Issues pertaining to gender equality and women’s social participation and vulnerability were also examined in several Reports and Recommendations such as: “Social Reintegration of Jobless People” (67/2002); “Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region” (70/2003); “The Fight against Poverty in the BSEC Member-States” (74/2003); and “Social cohesion within the BSEC Member States: contribution to political stability” (103/2008).

5. Taking into consideration the gravity of the issue of gender-based violence, as well as the momentum created by relevant initiatives at global level, the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee decided to take up the subject of “Protecting women against violence in the BSEC Member States” as the main agenda item of its 34<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Contributions to the Report were received from the national delegations of Azerbaijan, Greece, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine. Reference material was also obtained from the official websites of UN entities, IPU, EU and relevant international organizations such as the World Bank, the Council of Europe, Amnesty International etc.

## **II. DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

6. The term ‘violence against women’ is understood to mean any act of gender-based violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) defines VAW as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of

such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”.

7. Different forms of violence to which women are subject include sexual, physical, or emotional abuse by an intimate partner; physical or sexual abuse by family members or others; sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures (such as teachers, police officers or employers); trafficking for forced labour or sex; and such traditional practices as forced or child marriages, dowry-related violence and honour killings, when women are murdered in the name of family honour. Systematic sexual abuse in conflict situations is another form of violence against women. The Council of Europe estimates that between 20 and 25% of women in Europe suffer acts of physical violence at least once in their adult lives, and more than 10% are victims of sexual violence.

8. All these forms of violence are not examples of random victimization, but are associated with inequality between women and men, both as an extreme manifestation of this inequality and as a means of perpetuating it. Stereotypical attitudes about the roles of women and men in the family and society as well as stereotypical and sexist portrayal of women in media, especially advertising, exacerbate the problem.

9. Apart from the moral cost in terms of violation of human rights, the social and economic costs of violence against women are enormous as well. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities, and limited ability to care for themselves and their children. The direct and indirect costs incurred due to intimate partner violence are considerable, both for women and their families and for local and national governments. This fact stresses even more the need for the countries to set the reduction of violence against women as a key development goal. The UN Millennium Project’s Task Force on Education and Gender Equality identified the elimination of violence against women as one of seven strategic priorities for achieving Millennium Development Goal 3, on women’s equality and empowerment, and the MDGs overall.

10. According to WHO’s World Report on Violence and Health, one of the most common forms of violence against women is that performed by a husband or male partner. In Europe, about 12% to 15% of all women have been in a relationship of domestic abuse after the age of 16 and many of them have died (Council of Europe). Many more continue to suffer physical and sexual violence from former partners even after the break-up. This type of violence is frequently invisible since it happens behind closed doors. Moreover, legal systems and cultural norms often do not treat it as a crime, but rather as a private family matter or a normal part of life.

### **The BSEC Region**

11. Domestic violence, together with trafficking in women constitute the most serious threats to women’s human rights in the BSEC region. Trafficking has been, as mentioned above, discussed separately by the Assembly. This Report will focus mainly on domestic violence, a most insidious form of violence against women having ripple effects on society, to a greater or lesser degree, in all BSEC Member States.

12. In many BSEC Member States, the recent transition to a market economy and the social and economic hardship this process brought along, has resulted in a general decrease of status for women and increased the risk of multiple forms of violence in public and private spheres.

Although gender equality is ensured by law, in practice women bear a disproportionate share of the negative consequences of transition as is shown by high levels of unemployment and/or low paid jobs. This situation has disempowered women and made them increasingly dependent on fathers or husbands. Moreover, patriarchal and discriminatory attitudes more or less still persisting across the BSEC region are increasing women's vulnerability to violence and abuse.

13. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for the states to control domestic violence since in most of the cases it is reported only when there are severe consequences of the violence, the other cases being considered just family conflicts. As a result, it is usually experienced in silence and receives little recognition among officials (health workers, police, prosecutors etc), society and women themselves. It is difficult for women to report violence in the family as a crime because of the absence of a public discourse clearly condemning domestic violence and identifying it as a crime. In several Member States, reporting domestic violence is widely equated with 'destroying the family' and is strongly stigmatized.

14. It is also reported that the lack of specific legislation in some Member States contributes to impunity for crimes committed in the private sphere. It deters women from seeking recourse and reinforces police unwillingness to deal seriously with the problem, as they do not consider it a crime. Non-recognition of violence against women as a crime or violation of a human right is a key obstacle to justice. The lack of confidence in law enforcement agencies and the high cost of legal assistance are also major constraints for women in seeking help.

15. All these factors discourage many victims of domestic violence to file complaints. In cases that are filed, victims often withdraw their complaint due to economic dependency on or threats from the perpetrator, fear of losing custody of their children or the social stigma associated with making such violence public. Thus, very few complaints ever reach the courts or result in prosecution. At the same time, under-reporting hampers the development of sufficient protective infrastructure for victims of violence.

16. While a great deal has been accomplished already, there are still challenges and gaps in developing knowledge on violence against women in the BSEC region, due to the lack of standardized methods and instruments for data measurement and collection. Besides the issue of comparability and quality of data, there are enormous gaps in terms of territorial coverage, the populations addressed, and types of violence against women measured. Thus, more work is needed to ensure greater uniformity and comparability in the collection and reporting of data on all forms of violence against women, in order to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the impact of measures put in place for the elimination of this phenomenon.

## **II. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND EXPERIENCE**

17. The framing of violence against women as a problem arose primarily, as a result of campaigning by feminist activists and the voluntary sector. NGOs have been influential in shaping the current global policy framework on women's empowerment and gender equality - the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They continue to play an important role in holding international and national leaders accountable for the commitments they made in the Platform for Action.

18. In 1993, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defined violence against women and girls as encompassing all forms of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, inflicted in public or private. This landmark declaration, along with the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, adopted by 189 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, solidified the importance of combating violence against women in decision-making circles. More precisely, the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent documents required that States undertake an audit of their legal framework, taking whatever measures necessary to ensure that all forms of violence are addressed in criminal and civil law. Specific requirements involve ensuring that: rape is a crime against the person rather than against morals, which cannot be erased through marriage; domestic and intimate partner violence is criminalized; trafficking and sexual exploitation of children are criminalized; harmful practices are addressed.

### **Legal framework**

19. The BSEC Member States are States Parties to all the major relevant international human rights conventions and regional human rights instruments, including:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (The first legally binding international document prohibiting discrimination against women and obligating governments to take affirmative steps to advance the equality of women);
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR).

20. For the BSEC Member States which are members or accession countries to the EU, *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* guarantees the right to physical and mental integrity, the right to work, non-discrimination, equality between men and women "in all areas, including employment, work and pay," the right to "working conditions which respect health, safety and dignity," and the right to an effective remedy. After being included in the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, the Charter has become binding EU law.

### **Initiatives and campaigns**

21. The UN Secretary-General's in-depth study – "Ending violence against women: From words to action," launched at the UN General Assembly in October 2006, provided a comprehensive examination of the universality, scope and extent of the issue and the related challenges and gaps in public responses. Following the launch of the study, the General Assembly adopted a comprehensive resolution (A/RES/61/143), which called upon Member States and the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to eliminate violence against women.

22. Numerous international level campaigns have been launched in the last years. The UN Secretary General launched in 2008 the global campaign *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* that will be sustained through 2015, the target date for the Millennium Development Goals. UNiTE aims to achieve, in all countries:

- The adoption and enforcement of national legislation in line with international human rights standards
- The adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national action plans
- Establishment of data collection and analysis systems
- Establishment of national and/or local awareness-raising campaigns
- Systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations

23. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) launched the *Say NO* initiative as a global platform for advocacy and action, contributing towards the objectives of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE campaign. On 25 November 2008, Say NO presented more than 5 million signatures to the UN Secretary-General, demonstrating public support to make ending violence against women a top priority for governments everywhere.

24. Following the adoption in 2006 of the Resolution on *How parliaments can and must promote effective ways of combating violence against women in all fields*, and recognizing that the efforts to eliminate this kind of violence require systematic and sustained action, the Inter-Parliamentary Union launched in 2008 a campaign and a program of work to support parliaments in their efforts to end violence against women. The commitment also serves to promote and shed light on a parliamentary contribution to the current unprecedented international efforts to end violence against women. The IPU undertakes a series of activities in three target areas:

- Building a strong and effective legal framework;
- Securing effective implementation of legislation;
- Reinforcing awareness, sensitization and visibility of violence against women.
- Production of website and campaign material;

25. The Pan-European Campaign of the Council of Europe to *Combat Violence against Women including Domestic Violence (2006-2008)* based on the Resolution 1612 (2006) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, has unfolded at intergovernmental, parliamentary and regional levels. The intergovernmental dimension focused on information and raising awareness regional workshops, the parliamentary dimension aimed at adopting legislative initiatives designed to find the best solutions in preventing and fighting against domestic violence and the regional dimension was dedicated to the local decision-makers.

## **Funding**

26. The UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, managed by UNIFEM on behalf of the United Nations system, is a grant-making mechanism established in 1996 that supports local, national and regional efforts to end violence against women and girls. Beginning in 2005, the UN Trust Fund has focused specifically on supporting implementation of laws and policies related to violence against women.

27. The EU has established the Daphne III program "to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk" for the period 2007-2013, as part of the General "Fundamental Rights and Justice" Programme and aims at supporting the activities of non-governmental and other organisations. One of the principal objectives of the programme is to assist and encourage non-governmental organisations and other organisations active in the field of prevention and protection of violence against children, young people and women, including sexual exploitation and trafficking in human beings and which provide support for victims and implement targeted actions to promote

rejection of such violence or to encourage attitude and behaviour change towards vulnerable groups and victims of violence.

### **III. PREVENTION AND RESPONSE IN THE BSEC MEMBER STATES**

#### **National Legislation**

28. All BSEC Member States are parties to the major international and regional human rights instruments, as mentioned above. The principle of equality is enshrined first of all in the Constitutions of the Member States. Legislation of all Member States guarantees equal rights for men and women and non-discrimination in all spheres of society.

29. Since the 1990s, and more intensively over the last decade, there has been a growing activity towards legal reform on domestic violence in the BSEC region. Countries throughout the region have recently enacted or are considering civil and criminal legislation that addresses domestic violence. These reforms appear most often in national plans, revisions or additions to family codes, criminal codes or, most effectively, in new more comprehensive laws addressing domestic violence:

#### **Albania**

30. The Law of 2006 *On Measures for Prevention of Violence in Family Relations* was an initiative of 20,000 citizens' signatures and was drafted by a coalition of civil society associations. Among the objectives of the law are:

- To set up a coordinated network of responsible authorities for protection, support and rehabilitation of victims, mitigation of consequences and prevention of domestic violence;
- To direct efforts for the set up of responsible structures and authorities at the central and local level in support of victims and prevention of domestic violence;
- To empower the judiciary in taking protection measures against domestic violence;
- To ensure/guarantee quick, affordable and simple services to the victims of domestic violence provided by courts and other law enforcement agencies in compliance with the law.

The law establishes an emergency protection order.

#### **Bulgaria**

31. On 16 March 2005, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted the *Protection Against Domestic Violence Act*. With this law the State recognizes the importance of the problem of combating domestic violence and confirms that violence within the family and partnerships is no longer a private matter, but a public concern. The law was one of the first of its kind in the region to include Order for Protection provisions. It created a special urgent civil procedure in cases of domestic violence, which is a *sui generis* procedure, although similar to the quick civil procedure. The law contains also elements of criminal procedure but remains within the framework of civil law, which provides for a burden of proof that is more favourable to the victim of domestic violence. The Protection against Domestic Violence Act also foresees the establishment of a new fund for the Financing of Programmes for Protection against Domestic Violence.

#### **Georgia**

32. The *Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of the Victims of Violence* was prepared and adopted on May 25, 2006. Its aim is to create foundation for the protection of the rights and freedoms of family members recognizing the equality of their rights, physical and psychological security, legal guarantees for the

protection of family values, as well as protection and rehabilitation of the victims of violence. The law outlines the main characteristics of domestic violence, specifies legal and organizational issues for the identification and elimination of domestic violence, as well as guarantees for social and legal protection and assistance of the victims of domestic violence. Amendments introduced in December 2009 aim to improve the law and make it practically useful so as to facilitate the legal mechanisms of protecting the victims of and eradicate domestic violence, as well as provide for effective implementation of the law. It is also significant that since April of the current year the law “On Gender Equality” was enforced in Georgia with the purpose to create the appropriate conditions for ensuring women’s and men’s equal rights, freedoms and opportunities and to eradicate discrimination.

### **Greece**

33. Law 3500/2006, entitled «*For combating domestic violence*» which entered into force on 24 October 2006, aims to prevent and combat domestic violence, and protect the fundamental rights of women and children. The forms of violence that are punished under the law are intimate partner violence, such as battering, marital rape, sexual violence and abuse, sexual assault and intimidation. This law provides for the punishment of these acts and for support and assistance to the victim/survivor of domestic violence. It also punishes the sexual abuse and assault of minors by adults to whom they have been entrusted or whose care they are under.

### **Moldova**

34. The *Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence* entered into force in September 2008. It defines what constitutes domestic violence, applicable both to cases of cohabitation and separate habitation, distinguishing, inter alia, among physical violence, sexual violence - including marital rape - or psychological violence. Clearly specified in the Law are not only the competencies of the central and local administration authorities, but also those of the centers and services of rehabilitation for victims. In addition, it contains provisions on the security of the victim as a human rights principle, the possibility for third party complaints and granting of protective orders within 24 hours of receipt of the complaint, obliging the perpetrator to stay away from the victim, her children or other dependants.

### **Romania**

35. The *Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence* was adopted in 2003. As result of the efforts made by decision-makers, specialists, and persons in direct connection with the victims of domestic violence, the framework draws on the ground - breaking work in the field of attending the victims of gender-based violence and of domestic violence in general. Among the main provisions of the Law are: training specialized personnel to develop therapy and counselling programs for the aggressors; possibility for NGOs to benefit from state budget subsidies or, according to the case, from the local budgets, under the stipulations of the law; providing the victims with shelter services for a period of 7-60 days, including counselling and legal help.

### **Ukraine**

36. The *Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence* 2001 covers three main aspects: law enforcement, social assistance and health. Ukraine was the first country of the region which enacted a special law in the sphere of combating violence against women. In 2008, the *Law On Amending Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine Concerning Improvement of Legislation for Combating Domestic Violence* was adopted, which particularly envisages work with the

persons who commit domestic violence. An important amendment was the removal of the definition of “victim-like behaviour” and the relevant Article 11.

37. For **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Serbia** and **Turkey**, as well as for the above mentioned Member States that have adopted specific laws against domestic violence, legal provisions addressing domestic violence are provided for in Criminal Codes and Family Law. For example in Turkey, the Family Protection Law as amended in 2007, provides for family court judges to decide on precautionary measures against the perpetrator, including orders to vacate the spouse’s house and/or to "apply to a healthcare institution for examination or treatment". Furthermore, “no fee is charged for the applications made for protection order and executive procedures of enforcement of the order”.

38. Although lack of a specific law on domestic violence is considered an obstacle to combating it, reforms ensuring clear language in the law criminalizing domestic violence can address this gap. For example, **Serbia** has enacted provisions clearly stating that domestic violence is a crime (Article 194 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia adopted in 2005). In **Turkey**, the Penal Code was reformed 2004 and, as a result of advocacy by women’s rights groups, offers stronger legal protections for women and girls’ rights to equality and physical integrity. More specifically, it provides more progressive definitions and higher sentences for sexual crimes; criminalizes marital rape and specifies measures to prevent sentence reductions for perpetrators of honour killings and rape. In **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** draft laws on domestic violence are in the process of being elaborated.

#### **Policies, Strategies and Programs**

39. National Action Plans/Programs and/or National Strategies on preventing and combating domestic violence exist in almost all BSEC Member States. Some Member States have adopted National Action Plans for Gender Equality with a separate chapter addressing domestic violence.

40. The National Strategy of **Albania** on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010) lays down the approaches and institutional mechanisms for mainstreaming gender issues into public policies, easing gender-based differences and preventing domestic violence by attacking the root causes of domestic violence and abuse.

41. In 2004, the Government of the Republic of **Armenia** approved the National Programme to Improve the Status of Women and to Enhance Their Role in Society in the Republic of Armenia for the Period 2004-2010. Section 5 of the Programme addresses violence against women, while Section 6 of the Programme addresses trafficking in women and girls.

42. In **Azerbaijan**, the National Plan of Action on Family and Women's Problems (2008-2012) contains a separate chapter on the prevention of violence against women, including domestic violence and early marriages. The “Complex Program of the Republic on combating domestic violence in democratic society” approved in 2007, envisages elaboration of strategic plans on every sphere in order to eliminate domestic violence, gender and other type of inequality and cruelty in the society as well as working out proposals on elaborating law on protection of women from violence.

43. **Bulgaria** adopted in 2006 the first National Program for Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence for the period 2007-2008. The Program establishes a national 24-hour

phone line for information for victims of domestic violence; envisages shelters for victims of domestic violence to be established in every regional centre; provides for the development and introduction of programmes and trainings targeting specific groups of personnel, including those working in specialized institutions, police officers, law enforcement officers etc. The Program targets prevention and protection from domestic violence through awareness-raising. It also provides for the creation of specialized programs for perpetrators. Currently, the National Strategy of Empowerment of Women 2009-2015, includes, amongst others, the goal of eradication of sexual violence and trafficking in human beings.

44. In Georgia, “The 2009-2010 action plan on measures of eradication of domestic violence and protection of victims of domestic violence” has been drawn in order to enhance the implementation of state policy on eradication of domestic violence and protection and assistance of victims of domestic violence.

45. For **Greece**, Combating Violence against Women has been priority issue in the framework of the National Strategic Plan for Development 2007-2013 within the special priority axis entitled: “Reinforcement of the gender equality policy”.

46. On 25 November 2009 the Ministry for Justice, Transparency and Human Rights has undertaken an initiative, announcing the National Program for Combating Violence against Women 2009-2013. It is the first time in Greece that a comprehensive action program is being drawn for combating gendered violence (distinct from the equality programme, part of which it was up to now) and it is to be implemented immediately. The program consists on the one hand of preventive actions against the phenomenon as well as for victims’ support and, on the other hand, of legislative interventions for strengthening the institutional framework. On the basis of the “Study on the development of a local authorities’ comprehensive model action plan to women’s benefit and for combating violence”, carried out by the Women’s Study and Research Center in the account of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, a Comprehensive Action Plan to Women’s Benefit and for Combating Violence at a National and Local Level has been drawn up.

47. In **Romania**, the National Strategy for 2005-2007 in the field of preventing and combating domestic violence focused on setting up an institutional framework for the social services’ system, designed to prevent and combat domestic violence at both central and local levels, and on improving the system’s capacity to provide a multi-sectoral approach. Furthermore, County level Annual Action Plans on domestic violence have been developed since 2007 in the 42 counties of the country.

48. The National Strategy on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in the **Russian Federation** (the Gender Strategy of the Russian Federation) was approved in 2006 and contains a separate section on the issue of violence. By decision of the Security Council of the Russian Federation the law enforcement bodies are involved in updating the existing legislation on violence against women and protecting victims of violence.

49. In **Serbia**, the Gender Equality Directorate launched the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promotion of Gender Equality (2008-2014) in January 2008. Among its strategic goals is preventing and fighting all forms of violence against women and securing comprehensive system for protecting women against violence; instituting gender

equality in the media, removing gender stereotypes and eliminating bigotry/hate rhetoric from the media.

50. Moreover, the National Millennium Development Goals of the Republic of Serbia, adopted in 2007, include the goal to develop a system for protecting women against violence and preventing violence against women by 2015.

51. The National Action Plan 2007-2010 on Combating Domestic Violence against Women in **Turkey** covers the fields of protection and prevention measures, empowering women and also refers to resource allocation and budgeting issues. The six main titles of the plan are: Legal Arrangements; Achievement of Awareness-Raising; Empowerment of Women; Provision of Protective Services; Provision of Curative and Rehabilitation Services; Cooperation among Institutions and Organizations.

52. The Ninth Development Plan covering the period 2007-2013 provides for combating of domestic violence to be sustained through enhancing education and vocational training opportunities with the aim of ensuring women's participation in economic and social life.

53. The Action Plan of the State Program for Ensuring Gender Equality in **Ukraine**, 2006-2010 envisages: organizing education and training programs as well as awareness-raising events; facilitating the function of telephone "hotlines"; improving the methodology of police investigation.

#### **Institutional mechanisms**

54. Most of the BSEC Member States have put in place institutionalized structures for protecting and counseling victims of domestic violence, bringing together relevant stakeholders of state institutions and the civil society. These include:

- The Sector on Measures against Domestic Violence in **Albania**, created in 2008 as part of the Directorate of Equal Opportunities;
- The Inter-departmental Working Group to Draft a Law on Domestic Violence in **Armenia**, created in 2007;
- The Group of Representatives from Governmental Institutions in **Bulgaria**;
- The Interagency Council on Implementation of the Measures of Eradication of Domestic Violence was created in **Georgia** in 2008, in order to facilitate effective implementation of functions of state institutions.
- The special Department to Address Gender Violence created in **Greece** by the Presidential Decree on "Organization of Structure of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality" in 2008;
- The National Agency for Family Protection operating since 2004 in **Romania**;
- The Labour and Social Welfare Committee of Saint Petersburg Coordination Council for the Prevention of Violence in the Family and in Related Social Institutions, in **Russia**;
- The Monitoring Committee on Violence Against Women established in 2006 in **Turkey**, by the Prime Ministry Circular on "Measures to be taken to prevent Custom and Honour Killings and Violence against Children and Women".

#### **Awareness raising and training**

55. The topic of violence against women, in particular domestic violence, is only very recently becoming part of education and professional training, even in fields of work that normally deal with violence, crisis and trauma, such as the police, the law, medicine, and social work. Training of the police is the most widely recognized need and seems to be

considered the most urgent step. Teachers and pre-school staff and media professionals are least likely to receive training.

Training programs for state officials have been implemented in **Armenia** since 2006. Furthermore, in the framework of the regional project Gender and Politics in the South Caucasus 2004-2008, a grant program entitled "Men Against Violence" was implemented. As a part of the "Men against Violence" program, training sessions were held for social workers of five regions of the republic, including in Yerevan, as were sessions on the topic "Prevention of Domestic Violence" in 15 middle schools for parent-teachers associations; courses on the topic "Problems of Domestic Violence and Journalists" were arranged for media representatives.

56. In **Bulgaria**, The Ministry for the Interior has organized 15 seminars for the training of its officials in the area of domestic violence. Domestic violence has also been included in the curriculum for vocational training of police officers. Further funding was granted by the Ministry of Finance in 2009 to train 400 more police officers of the Ministry of the Interior.

57. In **Greece**, the curricula of Police Schools include courses on the phenomenon of domestic violence. In addition, a series of educational seminars took place in February 2008 for police staff of the Emergency Squad, Duty Police Officers, and officials of Security Services and Police Stations, on addressing domestic violence.

58. The General Secretariat for Gender Equality has held two events to inform relevant professionals about the new Law on Domestic Violence. The first one was titled "Latest Facts about Domestic Violence" and was carried out in 2007, in cooperation with the Center of Penal and Criminological Research (University of Athens). The second one was titled "Domestic Violence: Prospects of Law 3500/06" and was carried out in the same year, in cooperation with the Athens Public Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Appeal and the Center of Penal and Criminological Research (University of Athens).

59. The Research Centre for Gender Equality, supervised by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality, implements a program entitled: "Sensitization of teachers and interventional programs promoting gender equality". During school-years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, the interventions were focused on violence against women issues.

60. In **Moldova**, the public campaign "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" has been launched since 2007, with participation of both non-governmental and governmental organizations, as well as international organizations active in this sphere. In September 2009 in Chisinau a training seminar was held, organized by the United Nations Fund for Population, the American Bar Association for Rules of Law and the National Institute for Justice, in which more than 50 experts in juridical sphere from all regions of Moldova took part. Within the abovementioned project, training courses were organized on "protection and assistance to the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. Their aim is to strengthen the potential of local multi-task forces for elaboration of a strategy for implementation of provisions of the respective laws on prevention and combating domestic violence and human trafficking.

61. In **Romania**, following Governmental Decision regarding cooperation between the Ministry of Interior, and Administration of Romania and the Ministry of Interior National Relations and Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) was signed between Romania and the Netherlands covering the period 2007-2009 regarding trainings and seminars for preventing domestic violence in rural areas. Over 900 police were trained in 2008 under this program. The trainings were scheduled to take place three times each year in 2008 and 2009.

62. In **Russia** training of staff from clinics and women's health clinics was established in 2008. Staff from clinics and women's health clinics is undertaking work to increase their awareness of violence and human trafficking. Work is being undertaken with forensic medical experts on matters pertaining to the effects of rape and violence, and courses on violence are being organized for gynecologists, pediatricians, psychotherapists etc.

63. Within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Council of Europe, over 150 teachers at the Ministry of the Interior's educational institutions have upgraded their qualifications in the area of violence prevention. The police authorities have been provided with better instructional materials to assist them in their practical work. The topic of violence has been updated within the framework of the academic disciplines currently taught at the Interior Ministry's educational institutions: criminology, criminal law, family law, etc.

64. In **Serbia**, trainings for public officers were implemented in 2008 by the Gender Equality Directorate, based on a joint project with UNIFEM.

65. In **Turkey**, the Directorate General on the Status of Women is organizing in-service trainings in accordance with protocols signed with various public institutions and organizations. In this framework, 40.400 police officers' training on gender equality and the necessary procedures for dealing with women victims of violence was completed in 2008; 50.000 health professionals were trained by the end of 2009; 125 judges and 125 prosecutors of family courts attended special seminars; gender equality trainings were also initiated for public education officers at local level, attended by 770 public officers by the the end of 2009; military units were also provided with training material on gender equality and honour killings and 450.000 private soldiers receive relevant training on annual basis. The procedures to conduct similar programs for religious officers is going to be completed soon.

66. In the field of raising public awareness, all BSEC Member States have been conducting nation-wide campaigns, especially in the framework of the major international and regional campaigns launched by the UN, the Council of Europe etc. Such campaigns include television broadcastings and spots with the participation of celebrities (like the football national team of Turkey), publishing of information material and involving boys and men in the fight against violence.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

67. During the recent years, the BSEC Member States have embarked upon legal reforms and policy development with the aim to combat more effectively violence against women, a scourge affecting lives of women and societies across the region.

68. Passing laws to criminalize violence against women is an important response measure. However, more efforts are needed so as to address the gaps and weaknesses in implementation of the laws and to translate them into concrete action and particularly into

financial support and budgets to address violence against women, including domestic violence. Diligent monitoring by advocates and legal system professionals are also crucial in order to assess the efficiency of the laws.

69. Global initiatives and experience have made clear the fact that violence against women requires a comprehensive response, building on the contribution of all stakeholders. What is more, strategies to combat violence need to be holistic in their approach, moving beyond mere criminalization to include prevention and assistance measures, as well as initiatives aimed at changing the social attitudes and beliefs that encourage male violence. Combating violence against women requires challenging the way that gender roles and power relations are articulated in society. Raising awareness of the issue of violence against women and promoting gender equality are as important as taking legal steps to protect women's human rights.

70. Effective policies to combat violence against women also require accurate data. Systematic and quality data collection, violence definition and development of indicators to measure the prevalence of the phenomenon are necessary in order to develop and also to evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken. Due to very limited reporting of domestic violence and sexual assaults, population-based surveys should be widened and intensified to fill the data gap.

71. Finally, firm political will and a commitment to implement established standards is a *sine qua non* condition to eliminate violence against women, which is rooted in inequality and discrimination against women. Parliamentarians - particularly women - are well placed to influence mentalities at decision-making level, since they are in a key position for coordination between civil society and legislatures.