

LATVIA

Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995): LATVIA

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000) are important instruments for the development of the gender equality policy in the Republic of Latvia.

Recognizing that gender equality is an inter-sectoral issue Latvia in the development of gender equality policy has applied gender mainstreaming approach since the very beginning. The first strategic document in the field of gender equality policy was the *Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation*. The Concept Paper accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers in October 2001 is developed in close cooperation between governmental institutions, nongovernmental organisations, researchers and branch experts. For the enforcement of gender mainstreaming, five main directions have been indicated: creation of national machinery; training and raising awareness in public administration, among civil servants; improvement of the legislation; development of the Programme for the implementation of gender equality setting quantitative and qualitative goals; regular monitoring and evaluation. Critical areas, problems and measures that need to be taken are identified in the document. The Concept Paper is used as a fundamental basis for the development of further plans of action and documents to implement the goals set in the Concept Paper.

Since the last review on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action + 5 in 2000 the promotion of gender equality has been in progress. However certain problems, for example tendency of poverty feminisation, domestic violence, need special attention and further policy actions. The goals of the Latvian gender equality policy and main problems that need to be addressed to implement gender equality correspond with the Millennium Development Goals.

Social integration of all groups of population, by creating equal opportunities for all people to participate in social life and development of the potential of national economy, plays an essential role in the sustainable development of national economy. Some groups of society due to low income, shortage of working places, inadequate education, and lack of work experience, stereotypes, inaccessible environment or family situation are endangered by risk of social exclusion much more than others and therefore need special approach for removing barriers for their integration into the labour market. Scope of social exclusion is considerable in Latvia. Women are one of the risk groups exposed to social exclusion and thus special attention and measures are needed. To eliminate the social exclusion the *Joint Inclusion Memoranda* has been elaborated and accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers in December 2003.

According to the international and European normative acts, which serve as a basis for the development of gender equality policy in all life spheres, gender equality is guaranteed in the

legislation of Latvia. The most important laws containing new norms promoting gender equality came into force during 2002: Labour Law and Law on Labour Protection. The standards of equal treatment for men and women are incorporated in these laws – equal pay, equal access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, parental leave, burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex and protection of pregnant workers. One of the recent changes to promote reconciliation of work and family life is the paid fatherhood benefit since 2004.

As regards to improvement of the legal framework, on July 9, 2002 the Cabinet of Ministers accepted amendments to the Instruction for preparation of legal acts, which provides for preparation of annotation for legal acts. In the annotation ex-ante impact assessment on gender equality situation should be done

The amendments to Labour Law, which prohibit discrimination (harassment, sexual harassment), have been prepared and submitted to the Parliament at the end of 2003.

However, the transposition of legislation is not enough. Effective application of the gender equality norms prescribed in the legislation becomes the main challenge now. Additionally awareness raising of all involved parts about incorporated norms regarding equal treatment is of very high importance.

Currently, active work to elaborate the *Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality* is going on and the Programme is to be submitted for acceptance in the Cabinet of Ministers till the May of 2004. The overall aim of the Programme is to promote an efficient, integrated and coordinated implementation of gender equality issues and develop sustainable institutional mechanism. Four main directions of action have been identified: education at all levels and awareness raising in the society about gender equality issues; reconciliation of work and family life; improvement of the administrative capacity to work with gender equality issues and improvement of the gender equality policy mechanism; prevention of violence.

The recently established bodies in the Parliament of Latvia - Gender Equality Subcommittee of Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee and Women's Interparliamentary Cooperation Group have the potential to become important instruments to raise the political discussions from gender perspective in different policies (not only social policy).

Recognising the importance of the international experience to promote gender equality, Latvia has successfully used the co-operation with international organisations to develop different measures to promote gender equality in Latvia.

Latvia, i.e. Ministry of Welfare that is responsible for gender equality issues in Latvian government, in the development of different initiatives and implementation of projects has cooperated and used the expertise of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), PHARE, European Community, etc..

The Government of Republic of Latvia signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Community and the Republic of Latvia on Latvia's participation in the Community

Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality 2001-2005 on July 12, 2002. Within its scope, Latvia has gained the possibility to participate in different subprograms, in order to strengthen the capacity and efficiency of main groups interested and involved in the promotion of gender equality.

The long cooperation between Nordic and Baltic countries in the field of gender equality has been very important for Latvia to implement new initiatives in the field of gender equality policy and projects for women's empowerment. The exchange programmes, conferences and seminars with experience and expertise of the Nordic countries have been a very significant support for Latvia.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Within the framework of Social Policy Research Programme of the Ministry of Welfare the research “*Understanding and Attitude of Society Regarding Gender Equality Issues*” was conducted in 2001. The research showed very clear perceptions and level of understanding of women and men towards gender equality issues. Still existing stereotypes about gender roles were identified among men as well as women. In order to inform the public in general on conclusions obtained in the research, the informative report “Attitude and Understanding of the Society Regarding Gender Equality Issues” was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers in December 2002. The overview of this research shows the problematical areas and provides arguments for further actions.

Analysing households according to the demographic content, two main types of households can be subject to increasing social risk – households with three and more children and single parent households with 1 or more dependent children (very often these households are sustained by a woman). In 2002 39% of the total number of children lived in the poorest 20% of Latvian households. The analysis of the poverty risk for various social demographic groups shows that poverty in Latvia has a pronounced gender dimension - a tendency of **poverty feminization**. The poverty risk for women grows as the number of family members is increasing. When taking upon themselves the duty of childcare women are restricted in their economic possibilities. Single - parent families with underage children and a woman as the head of the family are exposed to a higher poverty risk. As women receive, on the average, lower salaries than men, their average social contributions and in result pensions are also lower, which poses a threat for their poverty during the whole lifetime.

According to the data of Central Statistical Bureau, in 2002 21,8% of workforce had higher **education** - more than 50% of the workforce with higher education are women. In the sphere of education young women account the majority of graduates from higher education in Latvia today. The overall proportion of women among students is 61%. The proportion of women decreases when it comes to the employment positions at the highest level in the academic sphere.

Graduated from university by level 2000/2001		
	Women, %	Men, %
Diploma Studies	51	49
Master's Studies	67	33
Doctoral Studies	49	51

Source: Women and Men in the Baltic Countries 2002, Vilnius 2002

Vocational education and training establishments in Latvia are mainly small (250 – 400 students) and are not capable to offer sufficiently broad range of vocational training programmes, nor provide their quality, thus creating large differences in the education and training offer from regional and employment viewpoint. Out of the total number of students in vocational education and training in the age group of 15-19, approximately 40% are girls.

A significant factor characterizing **health** is the life expectancy, which in Latvia is marked by gender differences: the projected life expectancy for men is by 11 years shorter than the life expectancy for women (females – 76 years, males 65 – years). Men take also less care of their health than women, including their reproductive health.

To improve the situation the Cabinet of Ministers in July 2003 has approved a *National Strategy on Mother's and Child Health Care*. The strategy addresses mainly problems related to reproductive health, perinatal care, and health care of infants, small children and teenagers. An important political decision was the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 2003 and Secretariat of Minister for Special Assignments for Children and Family Affairs in 2002. Both institutions are dealing with very sensitive questions and social problems. Several programs and concepts to improve the children's, family and health conditions have been drafted.

Although legislation prescribes penalty for physical **violence**, psychological violence at the work place and in the family is not in the focus of attention in Latvia, and it is not discussed in legislation.

Domestic violence that is regarded as a very serious problem in Latvia has remained under the responsibility of non-governmental organisations, which provide assistance and rehabilitation for victims of violence. No special State Programme to eliminate, protect and provide rehabilitation for victims of domestic violence has been drafted. Non-governmental organisations mostly with support and financial funds from foreign organisations are implementing projects targeted to victims, general public and specialists who work with victims of violence.

Regarding violence against women and trafficking in human beings Latvia has a long and fruitful experience with Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). With support from NCM several projects have been implemented.

During 2001 the Nordic and Baltic Ministers for Gender Equality and the Nordic Ministers of Justice agreed to plan and carry out a joint information and awareness campaign on trafficking in women. The actual Campaign took place during year 2003 and was financed and carried out under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The aim of the Campaign was to “increase knowledge and awareness among the public, and to initiate discussion about the problems surrounding the issue of trafficking women”. To achieve maximum effects the Campaign was simultaneously carried out in eight countries. The Latvian Campaign was carried out through the Ministry of Welfare and included mainly seminars for different target groups. Seminars were prepared for governmental officials, unemployed and low-income women, school youth, etc. Also a television programme, a radio discussion and production of informative materials on trafficking in human beings were organized.

The International Organisation for Migration in cooperation with Latvian non-governmental organisations has conducted several projects to eliminate trafficking in human beings and raise the awareness. With support from governments of USA and Finland research “Trafficking and prostitution in the Baltic states. Social and Legal aspects” was published. Swedish government financed a hotline number and training programme for social workers and policemen. In co-

operation with Soros Foundation Latvia informative seminars for Latvian school youth about problem of trafficking and related risks were organized during 2003.

As the result of overall raise of awareness and more available information about the problem of trafficking, causes and consequences political discussions about trafficking have taken place more intensively. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior the *State Programme for Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2004-2008* has been elaborated and submitted for approval to the Cabinet of Ministers in January 2004.

Several amendments of Latvian Criminal Law have been made, thus providing legal instruments to fight trafficking. In the framework of this Programme it is envisaged to introduce the necessary amendments in Latvian legislation so that it would correspond to international law.

Since Latvia is not directly involved in any **armed conflict** or wars there are no special conditions or problems that concern women. Women as voluntaries compile about 3 % of Latvian National armed force. Latvian women equal as men can voluntary take part in peacekeeping operations. Women are not subject to the compulsory enrolment in the military service. The discussions about professional armed forces have started, as result women will have free choice to make a career in the military sphere.

Despite the high economical activity level of women, they find themselves in less favorable **economical circumstances**. The economic activity of women in the age group 15-64 is comparatively high – 64,1%, and women form 48,5% of the workforce. Over the period since 1994 the gender gap in wages has remained the same - with female wages being approximately 80% of the male level, even in those sectors where majority of the employed are female.

One of the main reasons for the economic inequality of men and women is the segregation of the labour market into “male / female professions”. Women are mainly employed in such low paid sectors as education, health and social work, while men dominate in following professions – industry, transport, storage and telecommunication.

Rate of employed persons and monthly average gross wages and salary by sex and kind of activity					
Kind of activity	Rate of employed persons (annual average)		Monthly average gross wages and salary, LVL		Female wages in % from males wages
	Females, %	Males, %	Females	Males	
Industry	39	61	136	169	80
Transport, storage and telecommunication	31	69	182	215	85
Financial intermediation	39	61	344	637	54
Education	78	22	155	168	92
Health and social work	84	16	131	156	84

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Statistical yearbook of Latvia 2003

As women receive, on the average lower salaries than men, their average social contributions and in result pensions are also lower, which poses a threat for their poverty during the whole lifetime.

Social partners are regarded as important partners to provide for more equal situation in the economic sphere. Discussions about flexible time and new forms of employment are becoming more and more intensive. Measures to allow both parents work full time would benefit the women and families' material situation.

Employed population aged 15 –74 years in the main job by sex and by occupation, 2002		
	Women, %	Men, %
Legislators, senior officials and managers	37	63
Professionals	67	33
Technicians and associate professionals	65	35
Clerks	85	15
Service workers, shops and market sale workers	73	22
Skilled agriculture and fishery workers	49	51
Craft and related trade workers	20	80
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	18	82
Elementary occupations	48	52
Armed forces	42	58
Total	49	51

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Women and Men in Latvia 2003

There are not formal obstacles for **equality in political representation**. The right of both genders to vote and be elected was recognized in Latvia already in 1918. However politics is one of the areas where the gender equality principle is not honoured *de facto*. Since the restoration of independence the gender balance among deputies to the Saeima (Parliament members) has not been observed.¹ Likewise at the Cabinet of Ministers there is a constant pronounced gender disproportion. This is considerably low in relation to the European countries where women form in some cases even 40% of the parliament.

In the Civil Service where there are more women than men, senior decision – making positions are most frequently held by men while women are more often delegated the role of deputies, substitutes, executors of decisions. Although at local governments the representation of women is slightly more balanced, still also at this level gender representation is not balanced. The low participation of women in politics is related to the political culture and the system in Latvia, which in a direct as well as indirect way create additional obstacles for women.

The fact that Latvia today has a female president, female speaker of the Parliament and female minister of foreign affairs (as of July 2003) has been a very positive example but at the same time the fact impedes fruitful discussions about women in politics and power positions. The gender-balance is more prevalent at the local level. Latvian women form 44% of the members of the municipal councils. But looked upon from a vertical power-perspective - only 15% of the mayors are female.

Project “Gender in Politics in Latvia” (Dec. 2001 – Dec. 2002) has been developed in the cooperation between Ministry of Welfare, the Resource Centre for Women “Marta” and Swedish partners. The main direction of this project is to promote strategies involving more women in election process and achieve that more women will get elected and re-elected in the next election

¹ 5th Saeima – 16% of women, 6th Saeima – 8%, 7th Saeima- 17%, 8th Saeima – 21%

on local level in March 2005. With the support from Swedish partners the participants of the project have a possibility to learn international experience and practise in organising elections and pre-elections campaign.

Significant gender disproportion can be observed also in other positions and levels where decisions are made (e.g., public agencies, executive positions of large enterprises) where the representation of women is low. The share of women among entrepreneurs/business people is still quite low - only 1,5% of the total number of employed women are employers (men – 4,8%). In all sectors research and comprehensive statistics are needed to analyse the way of recruiting women for highest power positions, and the possibilities of women to occupy and stay in these positions.

Many people, especially **women**, are unaware of their juridical and political **rights** in the field of gender equality. That is due to the lack of information in the society about these issues and possibilities to protect their rights. Additionally the societies' distrust in the court system and fear of possible sanctions are factors that influence the situation why there are so few complaints. In spite of the very low number of court cases and grievances in The Latvian National Human Rights Office progress regarding equal treatment and women rights protection can be observed. So we can notice, that the dissemination of information is a very important precondition for the achievement of a more gender aware society.

Through a successfully established cooperation between Ministry of Welfare and several media experts it has been possible to turn the **mass media** attention to gender equality issues. Still there is lack of understanding and awareness about the role of the mass media in replicating stereotypes and reporting about gender issues. Recognising the importance of mass media in the formation of public opinion one of the recently started projects is aimed at mass media professionals.

The project "Mass media in (re)distribution of power" (Jan. 2004 – March 2005) in the frames of the European Community Programme focuses on gender stereotypes in media. By challenging and changing existing stereotypes, the project aims to reach a situation when both genders are motivated and enjoy equal opportunities to participate in decision-making on issues important for the whole society. One of the main objectives of the project is to raise awareness of media practitioners, policy makers and general society about existing gender stereotypes that prevent full and equal representation and participation of both genders, especially, women in the decision-making process on issues important for the whole society.

The **gender mainstreaming** approach is included as a horizontal objective in the strategic documents of Latvia prepared regarding the accession to the European Union structures and use of European Union financial funds.

The knowledge about gender equality issues, equal treatment of men and women, gender mainstreaming methods are of very high importance in the policy making process. Main actors in this process who need to have the mentioned knowledge are civil servants and politicians. Therefore a training programme for civil servants on gender equality issues has been developed in spring of 2002. Training course is held in Latvian School of Public Administration. There are

discussions to incorporate the gender equality course as a compulsory precondition to obtain the status of civil servant.

PHARE Twinning Light project “Administrative Capacity Building of Governmental Bodies and Social Partners in Gender Mainstreaming Development and Implementation” (July 2003 – Jan. 2004) has been a very important step towards implementation of gender mainstreaming in national policies. Danish partners prepared and conducted training seminars about gender mainstreaming issues and methods. To ensure the sustainability of the knowledge distributed during the project the teaching model *Training of Trainers* was used. Additionally textbook and manual have been prepared.

In the frames of the European Community Programme the project “Promotion of Gender Mainstreaming in National Policies in Latvia” (Dec.2002 – Dec.2003) has been realised. As a result of this international co-operation recommendations for employers how to promote gender equality in company’s personal management were elaborated. The aim of this document is to explain gender equality issues, eliminate misunderstandings and stereotypes about women and men, and support equal opportunities for men and women in the employment sphere. At the same time training seminars for social partners and municipal servants were organised to explain the gender mainstreaming methods and discuss the gender equality policy. At the end of the project a national conference “The Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in Latvia: Where are we going?” was organised. Participants from state institutions, political parties, non-governmental and research organisations and mass media took part. During the panel discussions following aspects were discussed intensively: inclusion of gender equality issue in the political agenda, best practise of gender mainstreaming, current trends and future visions of gender equality policy.

Important step to promote gender equality issue on local level is United Nations Development Programme project “Gender Mainstreaming Development and Implementation at the Municipal Level in Latvia” (June 2003 – June 2004). The main goal of this project is to train the municipal servants about gender equality issues and its positive impact on human development, provide methods how to implement the gender equality principles at the local level and in the municipal policy.

The close cooperation with **social partners** (trade unions and employers organisations) and **non-governmental** organisations in carrying out different initiatives and projects needs to be mentioned. All the involved parties are aware that only through common efforts it is possible to change existing stereotypes, gender roles, promote empowerment of women and eliminate discrimination. After several projects and campaigns implemented by two or more partners together (Ministry of Welfare, Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, Latvian Employers Confederation, Latvian Gender Equality Association, research institutions and several NGO’s - the Resource Centre for Women “Marta”, Crisis Centre “Skalbes”, etc.), they have become constant partners and experts for each other.

Part Three: Institutional development

The first step to put in place the institutional mechanism was the appointment of the responsible governmental institution for gender equality issues. Since 1999, the **Ministry of Welfare** is designated to be the responsible institution for the development of gender equality policy in the government and since February 2003 gender equality issues are the responsibility of the Department of European and Legal Affairs, where Gender Equality Unit in July 2003 has been formed. Ministry's responsibilities in the field of gender equality contain the coordination of the implementation of the gender equality policy, monitoring and assessment of gender equality promotion programmes and projects, monitoring of the overall situation and the assessment of the political impact from the gender equality aspect, ensuring the co-ordination of various normative acts.

Since the approval of the *Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation* in 2001 network consisting of governmental, non-governmental institutions and research organizations has been set up. To ensure effective functioning of the institutional mechanism the distribution of possible tasks and responsibilities must be determined among all interested institutions – state administration, local governments, non-governmental organisations.

According to the governmental decision the institutional mechanism to co-ordinate gender mainstreaming in the governmental bodies is set up consisting of Gender Equality Council and inter-ministerial working group.

To ensure the implementation of gender equality issues at the highest level the **Gender Equality Council** was established in 2002. The advisory council is established and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers and contains 12 representatives of the top level of public administration, non-governmental and research institutions. The minister of Welfare chairs the Council, and the members of the Council are elected for 3 years. The Gender Equality Council is an advisory body in gender issues for the government and has a strategic role to promote the implementation of the gender equality policy at all levels in public administration institutions and to draft recommendations about the necessary changes.

In December, 2001 **inter-ministerial working group** was set up. There are representatives from line ministries, NGO's, Latvian Free Trade Union and Latvian Employers Confederation. The working group co-ordinates the incorporation of gender equality principles in the sectoral policies, programmes and normative acts. The working group has an important role in the development process of the *Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality*.

The **National Human Rights Office** monitors the compliance with norms in respect of gender equality and non – discrimination, provides consultations, recommendations on gender equality issues, reviews complaints on violations of gender equality, represents the individuals in court.

State Labour Inspectorate enforces application and supervision of the labour and health legislation, and safety at work as well as equal treatment prescribed in the Labour Law. As an example active supervision of job advertisements, where no gender distribution regarding the

required specialists in different professions and positions is allowed, can be mentioned. As result, almost no violation of this norm can be observed in the job advertisements in the newspapers.

Line ministries, as well as the **Secretariats of Ministers for Special Assignments** are responsible for the coordination of the incorporation of gender equality principles into the already existing and future policies, normative acts and programmes, preparation of proposals for the gender equality implementation, and information of the society about activities undertaken in the area of gender equality in accordance with their competence.

Womens' Interparliamentary Cooperation Group was set up in the beginning of 2003. There are all women parliamentarians involved in this group. The main idea to establish such a group was to highlight gender equality issue and to pay specific attention to the women's socio-economic situation and her role in society as a whole. Women parliamentarians having different party background formed this group two months after last parliament elections.

The recently established (in September 2003) **Gender Equality Subcommittee** of Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Latvian Parliament is responsible to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the legislative level - prepare proposals for legislative changes, raise discussions about gender equality, discrimination, gender mainstreaming, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings in the parliament and exchange the experience with other countries and adopt the best practices. The representatives of all political parties, which are represented in Parliament, take part in the work of the Gender Equality Subcommittee.

The **Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia** provides statistical data and analysis from gender perspective that is internationally comparative. It is planed to have more sex-disaggregated data in the future. The available sex-disaggregated data is used to justify the inequalities in different branches and argue for changes.

The **Latvian School of Public Administration**, involving local and foreign experts has developed training programmes on gender equality issues. It's planed that the training programme will be a compulsory course for civil servants.

Mass media, non-governmental organisations, experts and research institutions, which promote the public awareness about gender issues and the change of the gender roles and stereotypes, are an important partner for governmental institutions in the development of gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming. Therefore educational activities must be provided for journalists, municipal servants and other interested persons to enable them to understand gender equality issues in their entirety and complexity thus to provide comprehensive and objective information to the public.

However the capacity and awareness about gender equality issues among governmental specialists and other partners needs to be improved. The knowledge about implementation of gender mainstreaming in all policy levels and all spheres of life is lacking and appropriate financial and human resources need to be allocated to raise the administrative capacity.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

The Government of Latvia already by accepting *Concept Paper on Gender Equality Implementation* has decided to use the gender mainstreaming approach in defining goals for gender equality policy.

Three main challenges for Latvia are:

- Awareness raising about gender equality in the society and education of specialists and partners at all levels;
- Implementation of gender mainstreaming in all policies;
- Further development of the political will to include gender equality in the political agenda.

The most important policy instrument to implement the gender equality in Latvia is the elaboration of the *Programme for the Implementation of Gender Equality*. In the Programme main problems and fields where immediate improvement of the situation is necessary are defined. Taking into consideration the available resources and most urgent problems, measures in following fields of action are identified: education at all levels and awareness raising in the society about gender equality issues, measures to promote reconciliation of work and family life, administrative capacity building and development of gender mainstreaming to improve the institutional mechanism, and prevention of violence.

To fight trafficking in Human Beings *State Programme for Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings 2004-2008* has been developed and it has been submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for adoption on November 1, 2003. In the framework of this Programme it is envisaged to introduce the necessary amendments in Latvian legislation so that it would correspond to international law. The Programme is prepared by the Ministry of Interior and consists of four parts: preventive measures, improvement of legislation, preventive measures, and the development of assistance services and rehabilitation system.

At the moment in accordance with the Law on Social services and social assistance right to receive assistance is restricted for citizens and non-citizens of Latvia, or foreigners and stateless persons, who have an identity number in Latvia, except persons with temporary residence permit. Rehabilitation for victims of trafficking cannot be financed from state budget programme. A special Programme financed from state budget provides rehabilitation of children, which have been sexually abused.

The Cabinet of Ministers in May 2002 has approved a *Concept Paper on National Family Policy*. Under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Family and Children Affairs a *National Action Plan for the Implementation of National Family Policy* has been elaborated and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers.

All mentioned documents are based and comply with international norms, recommendations (including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly, Millennium Development Goals) and standards.

Development of **gender mainstreaming** is also a challenge for the development of gender equality policy and gender equality implementation in all spheres of life. Possible new forms of co-operation, capacity building and development of methodologies and instruments are of very high importance. A non-stop education and information about gender mainstreaming of all involved partners has to become a regular measure.

For the successful implementation of all kind of gender equality measures **political will**, deep understanding of the issue and lobbying needs to be improved. Not regarding two new gender equality establishments in the parliament gender equality is still not a constant issue of concern in the political agenda. Therefore international experience to convince the highest decision-making level about the importance of gender equality issues in the process of the sustainable development of the society is needed.