

# FAIR PLAY

Gender & Development Magazine  
of KARAT Coalition, 2/2000

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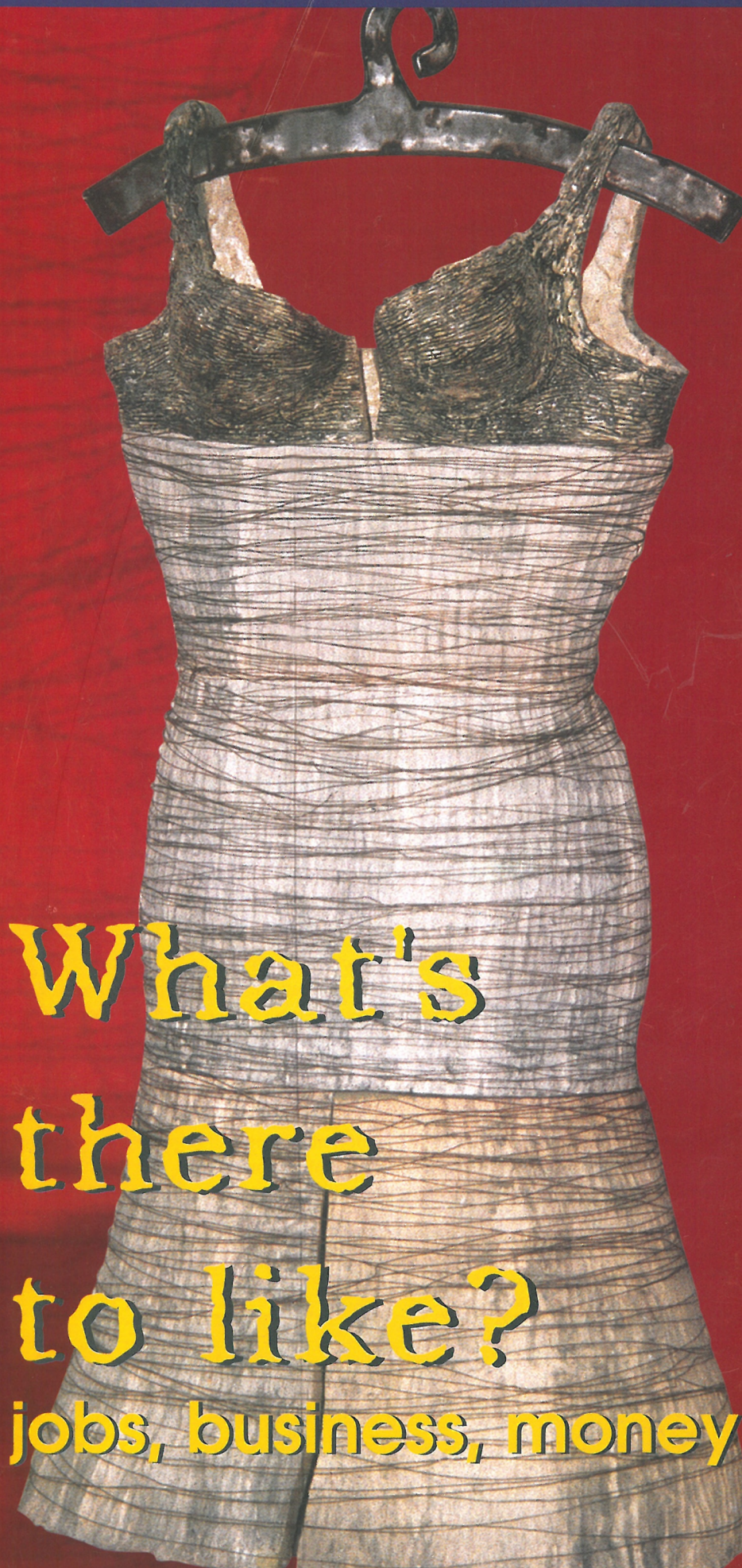
Romania

Russia

Slovakia

Ukraine

Yugoslavia

A dress made of barbed wire hanging on a metal hanger against a red background.

What's  
there  
to like?

jobs, business, money



# Gender Equality -



# Not Everyone's Cup of Tea?

**I**t was in January this year that the Bulgarian Social Minister, Mr Nejkov, first announced that ministry was to draft an equal opportunities bill - and it generated only laughter among the journalists in the audience and headlines shouting: Beware! Men endangered! At the end of June, two weeks after the United Nations announced its establishment, a working party on the creation of institutional mechanisms that would guarantee equal opportunities for men and women began functioning in Bulgaria. This time the government kept its promise to invite NGOs as partners, and the minister of labor and social policy was asked to chair the discussion. The Women's Alliance for Development took an active role in this.

## The questions in the minds of so many women in Bulgaria are:

Will a government agency be able to deal with the multi-faceted aspects of gender inequality in a context of widespread mistrust among the population to all state institutions in recent months? And, if not, who else can take the responsibility for creating equal opportunities for women and men in political, economic and social spheres? It is true that the government has waited too long and is now rushing to fulfill this extraordinary accession-related order (from Brussels) in quick time. If a state's mechanism for equal gender rights begins functioning by December 2000, this will not only foster our pre-accession negotiations, but also boost the government's pre-electoral campaign. This is most probably the idea behind the speeded up fabrication of the new law. While the problems it has to deal with are manifold. Unlike other laws, a law on gender equality must influence policies and strategies in all spheres of the country's economic, political and social life. How effective a state institution promoting gender equality will be depends mostly on the mentality of the people that make up the institution. Bulgarian state institutions are formally in line with the recommendations of the European Union but they function in a way incompatible with the European standards. Will this one be any different?

There are some countries in the world in which it is legally forbidden to cite gender as a selection factor in a job ad. This is based on the assumption that women and men are capable of doing the same kind of work. The articles sent by our international contributors tell a different story. Women from the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), have to put up with lower wages than men and various forms of harassment (age, appearance, and behavior) if they want to have a job. And these are problems which are avoided by politicians through emphasis on women's roles as mothers and housewives.

This issue of the KARAT Coalition magazine will raise the common problems that women in the CEE and CIS countries face in the job market, as well as presenting some positive examples how to deal with these problems. It will focus on the various ways in which grassroots women from these regions come together to fight poverty, unemployment and human trafficking.

*Enjoy reading!*

## Letters to the Editor?

**You** are welcome to give your opinion on anything discussed in Fair Play - or to spark a new discussion. Include your name, address and e-mail address. Letters should be as brief as possible. The editors reserve the right to edit submissions.

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This the story only Fair Play has.

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**HOT SPOT**

# Needles in Networks -

## Multinationals Discover the European Low-pay Backyard



**Bettina Musiolek**

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"I am chick and you have to toil. Women's labor for the global fashion market" 1997 (German)  
"Fashion multinationals under pressure. Codes of conduct: a model to enforce labor rights? A critical review" 1999 (German)

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"Workers earn on a piece-rate basis. We never know how many hours we'll have to work at the beginning of the day, sometimes 24 hours in a row to finish an order. Daily I work at least 10 hours, sometimes seven days a week. Physically this is not possible, but it is the only thing we can do. Overtime is 'voluntary' but if I refuse I will be fired. The official contract states eight hours per day, five days a week. Last September I worked 150 hours overtime. My wage is 150-200 DM per month on average. In top months - with a lot of overtime - the maximum is 250 DM. Overtime is a necessity for the women because of the need for a higher income. But sometimes, for vague reasons and excuses my salary is withdrawn.

I have no health insurance and pension. Already 200 DM is too little to live on. There are women who work during their holidays in other factories to earn extra money.

There have been times when wages were not paid for three months. Fines imposed on factory owners by labor inspectors for poor health and safety conditions are sometimes even deducted from workers' wages.

Foreign firms don't permit local subcontracting factories to allow active unions. During talks foreign buyers say that union organization is allowed. In practice, however, it is not. The union is allowed to exist, as long as it makes no claims. If it does, the workers in the union get fired. So they don't organize unions - because of the fear of losing their jobs. The legal system is corrupt. The workers get no support from the government or other organizations like municipalities. For women the situation has become worse. Social services do not exist - such as childcare facilities and

free education. Because the women are always working they can't take care of the family and children. In this region women are usually the sole breadwinners in the households. Consequently for them to earn something is better than nothing at all." (Recorded by Ruth Vermeulen)

This is the account of a seamstress from Bulgaria. Bulgaria? Isn't clothing and sportswear manufacturing more usually associated with Asia? What attracts clothing and sportswear giants to countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Poland?

Garment production has for a long time been recognized as a labor-intensive, low wage activity. Within the last 25 years many companies from industrialized regions have relocated some of their production operations to the so-called 'developing' countries. These are relatively easy operations to relocate and firm movements tend to be rapid.

**Why has Central and Eastern Europe become a magnet for the international clothing and sportswear producers?**

Central and Eastern Europe's presence within the international clothing and sportswear sector is growing fast. Poland and Romania in particular are real shooting stars as far as garment exports are concerned. They are among the major EU suppliers. Of all the EU countries, it is Germany for which Eastern European countries are most important to the

Central and Eastern Europe has become a new target area of the "Clean Clothes" campaign that aims to improve working conditions in the garment industry worldwide



clothes trade. Garments and sportswear were and still are an unusually dynamic field of trade between the East and the West.

Proximity to the markets, available capacity, plus qualified labor forces, and existing infrastructure all combine to make the CEE region attractive to the garment industry. In other words, cheap, qualified female labor is the basis for this garment trade business. Currency devaluations and the resulting low labor costs add to the list of reasons.

There are other 'attractions' in the region: the EU trade policy favors outward processing trade (OPT) - the well-known *Ishleme* - with CEE countries in its preferential system. Outward Processing Trade takes place when some phases of the clothing production chain - typically the sewing phase - are carried out by subcontractors. Through its preferential trade system, the EU encourages the establishment of OPT production shops and promotes competition between suppliers and subcontractors in CEE. These trade policies create artificial competition amongst thousands of small suppliers, subcontractors and home-workers.

All in all, the motivations for Western European and North American garment retailers to produce in Eastern Europe are not enhancing good labor practices. A highly dependent, vulnerable, and highly mobile economy is being created which is quick to "cut and run". The benefits of this economic model have already been questioned considerably in regard to other regions of the world.

## Who is responsible for the bad working conditions?

The world clothing market is a highly regulated one. The garment trade is characterized by an imbalance of influence between small producers and multinational buyers such as retail chains, mail order companies, and sportswear brands. Companies like Nike, Adidas, Puma, C&A and OTTO Versand use their buying power to set the standards: prices, quality and ... working conditions. Their huge rate of turnover and supply dictate the economic and social conditions throughout the whole supply chain. Therefore the "Clean Clothes" Campaign levels the chief responsibility for the bad working conditions of the supply chain at the very top: the retailer, mail-order company or sportswear firm. Their responsibility is not mentioned in international or national legislation, or in the social clauses of trade agreements. The latter address governments or contractors but not international retailers. However, the issues of corporate social responsibility have been raised and many companies feel obliged to respond. Moreover, the notion of responsibility should apply to the whole subcontracting chain including casual and contract labor, informal sweatshops and home-workers.

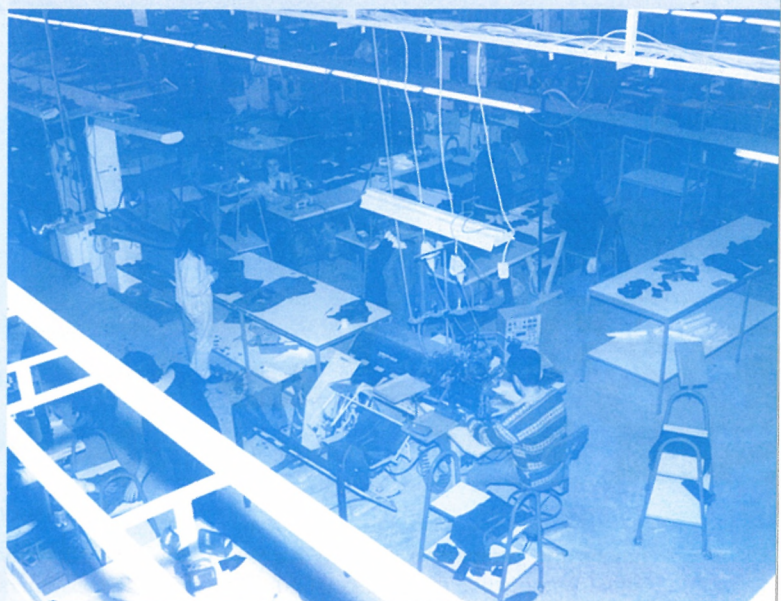
## Violations of labor rights in Central and Eastern Europe - the other side of the coin

Research by activists of the Clean Clothes Campaign found these are the burning issues at the workplace in Central and Eastern Europe:

- Low wages, which range from 80 DM/40 USD per month to around 500 DM/260 USD in Poland, for instance. The common concern is that this payment is inadequate for making a living. Ninety nine per cent of garment workers

around the globe experience the same. That is why in Europe and North America there are awareness campaigns for a decent living wage. Women are seen as supplementary wage earners - to justify lower payment, whereas in reality women workers in garment export factories and sweatshops are often the only breadwinners in the family. In addition to the tiring job behind the sewing machine they have to toil on a small agricultural plot. Subsistence and informal work is the recipe for survival in their families. Maybe the share of the shadow economy in the GDP is 30 to 50 percent, but it is 90 percent in the lives of the "working poor". In other words: labor costs are low because part of the reproduction costs for the labor force is unpaid.

- Casualisation of labor: no labor contracts, excessive and irregular working hours, short-term contract labor, forced and unpaid overtime while quotas are being met, official bookkeeping up to the legal minimum wage - the rest paid 'off record'. In some factories, workers are locked inside until they have completed their quotas, with serious implications for fire safety. Even child labor is no longer a taboo because of the precarious economic situation of many families.



- Denial of the right for organizing and collective bargaining. Active repression of trade unions by employers and mistreatment of worker activists is becoming widespread.

- Abusive treatment of workers. There are reports on physical abuse including body searches, strip-searching and sexual harassment.

Working conditions in CEE countries are strikingly similar to those in other sweatshops around the world such as South East Asia or in the US migrant labor sweatshops. The infamous 'attractive' labor costs in the garment sector, where the majority of workers are women, are the lowest compared to those of other branches.

In 1999 Adidas - a Germany-based company - achieved the best economic result in its history with a net income of nearly 1 billion DM. Adidas and NIKE, the top two sportswear firms, have paid nearly 2 billion DM just on sponsoring and promotion this year. The EURO soccer championship was financially a highly significant event for them. These incredibly high amounts of money apparently





▶▶ need no justification - whereas paying an extraordinary wage of 300 instead of 150 DM is unthinkable for them.

In their recent reports the United Nations Development Program, the International Labor Organization and the Social Watch have shed some light on the dramatic regress in social development in CEE. Neil Kearney, General Secretary of the International Textile, Garments, Leather Workers' Federation, addressed the 'Gulag labor' conditions in Eastern Europe at a recent European Social Dialogue conference.

But still the working and social conditions in the CEE region are not being discussed in the same way and not to the same extent as in Asia and Central America.

The process of transition has created a context where respect for the social and economic human rights is widely undervalued. The severe and still increasing social and economic problems of the people are regarded as a necessary sacrifice at the altar of the free market economy. From the point of view of Western trade



unions the perspective is often narrowed down to allegedly "unfair competition through social dumping". Western consumers know that garments are made in Asia under bad working conditions. That these conditions also prevail in the CEE countries is something rather new to consumers. For them Eastern Europe does not seem to be Europe, it is still a sort of 'black box' in the 'Far East'.

## **Demands of the "Clean Clothes" Campaign**

In this context the Clean Clothes Campaign wants to create space for international solidarity and networking in order to improve working conditions in the global clothing and sportswear industry. It maintains that the often referred to 'national interests' should not be upheld at the expense of (women) workers of any other country.

The Clean Clothes Campaign started in 1989 when a lockout in a clothing factory in the Philippines became the focus of attention for a number of groups active in the solidarity movement in the Netherlands and the UK. At that time there was virtually no knowledge in Western European countries about the way consumer products were being made, and the

consequences for women workers. It was considered news that companies like C&A produced in faraway countries where working conditions are very poor, news that there were women involved, and especially news that people who held a retailer company such as C&A were responsible for all of this. When campaigners burnt clothes in front of C&A's main store in Amsterdam and it led to fights between activists and police, C&A took steps, though publicly denying any responsibility for what happened at the subcontractor. They wrote letters to the contractor telling them to settle, one way or another, with the subcontractor. Throughout 1989 and 1990 (as the case dragged on) the different groups involved managed to keep having actions. Press attention was ongoing and stories about women workers, the international division of labor, and the retailer's responsibility received more coverage. Research on C&A continued to reveal new cases, in Bangladesh, India, and the sweatshops of the Netherlands. The solidarity groups involved took care of communications with local worker organizations. Clearly, this initiative struck a nerve: campaigning for Clean Clothes provided a concrete way of bringing up the political demands of women's and labor organizations.

Eventually, the Clean Clothes Campaign workers' chart was created. Its Code of Practice, provides for minimum labor standards as defined in the conventions of the International Labor Organization, for example:

- No forced or bonded labor (ILO conventions 29 and 105)
- No discrimination in employment (ILO conventions 100 and 111)
- No child labor - minimum age = 15 years (ILO convention 138)
- Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining (ILO conventions 87, 98, 135 and recommendation 143)
- No excessive working hours - maximum 48 per week and a maximum of 12 hours overtime
- A decent living wage
- Established employment relationship
- Decent working conditions

Organizations from 10 Western European countries are involved in the Clean Clothes Campaign. These include trade unions; human rights, women's rights and consumer organizations; researchers; solidarity groups and activists. The strategy is to raise awareness among consumers, to lobby and pressure retailers and to carry out labor rights solidarity work. As a result many retailers have begun over the past years to accept responsibility for the conditions under which the clothes they sell are produced.

There is still a tremendous need for social regulations and public discourse on the social and economic impacts of the export-oriented, labor-intensive restructuring. Yet a global view of the processes involved is lacking. Space needs to be created for learning to take place, so that the lessons of those who have experienced this economic growth model as seen in Asia and Central America and now in Central and Eastern Europe can be considered. At the same time consumers and workers in the West need to be made aware of working conditions in their neighborhood.

**Further reading:**  
**"Made in Eastern Europe" -**  
**information brochure jointly published**  
**with the Dutch Clean Clothes Campaign (English)**  
**[www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org)**



**W**hile reform in Russia paved the way for the emergence of a private sector - generally regarded as a positive thing - the labor laws there are widely violated within it. Employees' rights are grossly violated, especially women's, since it is women who after losing their jobs end up replenishing the staff of small private business and trade, working largely as shop assistants and on markets. In the absence of regulatory mechanisms, the private sector appears to operate beyond the reach of the labor laws.

## JOB SATISFACTION: A THING OF THE PAST?

Advocates of small business indicate its important role in stabilizing the social and economic spheres, raising the living standards of employees and creating effective demand, and encouraging consumer savings.

As our survey shows, experience of women in small businesses indicate things are not so. Similarly to the way it happens in other spheres of the labor market, women hired in this sphere consider their employment

Remarkably, the higher a woman's level of education and expertise, the more acutely she feels she is a social outcast. And while the American sociologist A. Toffler wrote about the «shock of meeting the future», we would characterize the social sentiment of female small business employees as the «shock of no future» or life prospects.

*«We got right into the midst of these reforms... I sometimes think: why ever do we have to go through this? I really wish I had been born some 20 years before I was actually born ... I would now have been an old lady on pension ... To think, though, today's pension is something*

# WHAT'S THERE TO LIKE ?

**The challenges and frustrations faced by small business women employees in Russia**

**Elena Mashkova**, PhD in Economy, sociologist, Director of the women's NGO FEMINA, Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia, whose major activities include research, education and information. Head of the Personnel Management chair, Institute of Management; lecturer in Gender Studies. Has published 23 scientific articles on women's status; organized six regional conferences; presented reports at more than 20 international conferences. Over the last 8 years has been dealing with women's issues in the areas of employment, social protection, empowerment, and business. In 1993 wrote a Ph.D. thesis concerning women's employment in a monoindustrial city. Has recently started to write her doctoral thesis on the impact of globalization on general employment in Russia. Her key interest is the gender aspects of globalization. Under the «Women's Human Rights: Step by Step» Project, the Coalition of Women's Organizations from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Arzamas and Naberezhnye Chelny conducted the sociological survey «Violation of Women's Rights in the Private Sector» on which this article is based.  
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■ by E.V. Mashkova and E. A. Ballaeva

secondary to their household duties. Our interviews revealed that shift work, lower labor intensity, pay and payment methods, proximity to home, etc. were viewed as positive incentives. In addition, women emphasized the limited employment opportunities available.

Many did not like what they were doing and wished they were back in their previous job.

*«Sometimes I cry at night, I want my old job back so much. So I wake up and cry! I was a good engineer, I mean I was committed and honest. Not a genius, of course, but I was proficient, that's for certain» (from interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)*

This respondent also said she would never be able to return to her previous profession because she was no longer qualified and incapable of mastering new technologies.

*that makes the retired struggle to stay longer in this world» (from interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)*

Many fear to lose work and subsistence.

*«Well, I fear that one day you may get fired for no reason at all, just because somebody has said something. You just get fired with no explanation whatsoever. These things do happen ... If he (the boss) is not happy with somebody, the problem takes no time to solve - you're just sacked and that's it» (Natasha, 25, salesgirl, private stationery store, Naberezhnye Chelny)*

Some women have had to change jobs more than twice over the last three years. The reasons were closures due to bankruptcy, bad relations with their employers, unsatisfactory schedules, wage levels, payment procedures, and working





Monika Popova

►► conditions. On several occasions women had to quit or take long-term leave because of pregnancy or illness or in order to look after their sick children or other relatives.

When asked why - despite their low assessment of working in small business - it is this sector that they again found themselves working in, the following answer was typical:

*«I've got nowhere else to go. No other way out. Who else will want me? With my illness, my age? I just want to earn a bit so I can live. So I've got to work»* (Lidia, 48, street vendor, Arzamas)

Most of the outdoor market vendors with a long record of employment in small business gave an answer like this:

*«I sort of got used to it ... My profession is hardly of any need now, it's rather specific. Working here keeps you going somehow...»* (from interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)

Unstructured employment is typical of the small business labor market in general. Labor turnover is high, personnel transfers are few and far between, and female workers are always ready to change jobs. An important component of the professional self-identification of small business employees is the societal reaction from other groups of the population. Basically, this reaction is negative to a certain extent. In people's minds small business is closely associated with dishonesty, crime, illegal income, etc. Typical therefore is the confession of a young female outdoor vendor. When asked if she liked her work, she answered:

*«What's there to like? Cheating people ... I sure don't like it ... I really hate this! So what do I do?!»* (from interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)

When we asked our respondents how they assessed their level of income, almost all said they were quite content with it. However, when we asked them to rate their material status according to the categories: rich, well-off and poor, the majority were inclined to say poor. The

income level assessment was affected by the comparatively worse financial position of the bulk of the employed population, so the respondents for the most part felt privileged to a certain extent.

*«If you come to think of it, I may be underpaid. Our work is really hard ... But they do not pay at all at the dairy»* (Alexandra, 44, small business employee, Arzamas)

The interviews revealed that small business mainly creates unskilled jobs. Our respondents report that they had needed no retraining or professional development programme to their new jobs.

*«First I feared I wouldn't cope with this selling job. But frankly, this is a simple trade. True, I was a bit jittery at first ... Now it seems funny ... I'll tell you what: women in Russia can do everything. Got a lot of stamina. I am a cook, a doctor, a dressmaker, a teacher ... Honestly, you don't need any particular skills here. What did I study for? That is what I've come to ... It's hard work really»* (form interview, Odintsovo, Moscow Region)

It may be assumed that the desire (and the need) to improve expertise is directly linked to one's professional status; a higher status encourages female employees to acquire additional knowledge and professional skills. For example, only two women from the group representing the Moscow Region told us that they needed further training in order to perform their official duties. One of them was the manager of a trading house, the other was a lawyer at

a private legal advice office.

They both took a professional retraining course at their own expense. Now they are regular buyers of special literature and subscribers to specialized publications. Characteristically, they were the only women who seemed fully contented with

their work in small business, regarding their current positions as professional advancement.

To be continued in the next issue of Fair Play

## Share good news with a colleague!

If you know someone who is interested to learn about empowering women in changing societies in Central and Eastern Europe, please fill out the form below and send it to the Editor of Fair Play magazine: Women's Alliance for Development, 52 Neofit Rilski str. Sofia 100, Bulgaria; e-mail: wad@infotel.bg, and we will send them a sample copy.

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■ by Genoveva Tisheva

# WHEN ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING BECOMES AN OBSESSION

**How privatization affects Bulgarian women in the process of economic transition. Outcomes of research conducted by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation.**

**T**he political changes in early 1997 and the accession of the current government aimed at overcoming the economic crisis and at accelerating structural reform and the integration of Bulgaria in the European structures. Accession to the EU became a real obsession for the government. In view of monetary stabilization, in July 1997 a Monetary Board was introduced. The project of speeding the reform, postponed by previous governments, is implemented at the price of restrictive taxation and social policy which causes a serious decrease in the income of the population. The living standard of the population is continuously dropping and the number of people living beneath the poverty line is growing. The economic environment seriously affects the labor force - unemployment, salary cuts, mass redundancy, violations of

social-economic rights are widespread. These outcomes are especially true for women, who despite formal declarations of equality and some achievements from the past, are disproportionately affected by the economic restructuring. Women's qualifications are generally lower and women bear a heavy social burden (caring for the children and the family). Their social achievement is strongly related to their reproductive functions. This makes them less competitive in the free labor market.

## **Women are disproportionately affected by the economic restructuring**

Privatization is one of the central economic policies of the current Bulgarian government and at the same time it is a component of globalization. The opening of the EU (Bulgaria has been an associated country since 1995 and in March 2000 started negotiations to join the EU), to the foreign investments and markets is a characteristic of the globalization. This is the context of the research conducted by the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation in co-



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is a lawyer. She has an M.A. in Law from the Law Faculty of Sofia University; she has specialized in International Private Law, EU Law, International Human Rights Law at the Robert Schumann University in Strasbourg, France and Comparative Law at the International Faculty of Comparative Law. Genoveva is a practising lawyer with extensive experience in Bulgarian human rights and women's rights NGOs. Since 1998 she has been the Executive Director of the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation. She has coordinated research and advocacy projects on domestic violence and women's social-economic rights.

She is co-author of the publication "The impact of Privatization on Women during the Economic Transition in Bulgaria" of the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, September 1999. As a member of the KARAT Coalition, Genoveva actively participates in the Beijing plus 5 process.

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operation with Women, Law and Development International. The research focuses on the intersection of the economic reforms, which are necessary and inevitable, and the status of women's social-economic rights.

Because of the intense pressure to develop the private sector, neither the government nor businesses seem to be considering the gender disparities resulting from their policies. The research findings show

that women are disproportionately affected by the privatization in Bulgaria. Research conducted in Poland, Russia and the Ukraine yields similar conclusions. The economic and financial constraints mean that the state is more likely to meet the requirements of the international lending institutions than of its own people. The government failed to balance the effect of the structural reform and the globalization by stronger safety nets, regulatory capacity and more transparency. Social rights were sacrificed to the structural reform and poverty became a pervasive phenomenon. The government denies that corruption is widespread and consequently, the institutionalization of corruption is a real issue today.

## Two-thirds of all Bulgarians live below the poverty threshold

The economic indicators confirm the negative trends. According to the trade union Podkrepa two-thirds of all Bulgarians are living between the upper and the lower poverty threshold. Bulgaria does not have an official poverty threshold. The minimum wage is less than 50 USD and can cover only five percent of actual needs. In Bulgaria the dependency ratio is 1:4 - only one of every 4 people works. According to the data from the National Employment office, as of March 2000 the level of unemployment is 18.75 percent which represents an increase with 42.4 percent compared to the status in March 1999. The forecast of the trade unions is alarming - 29 percent unemployment by December 2000. The employment ratio of women is dropping - it is now 36.8 percent. Women make up about 52 percent of the unemployed total and represent a greater proportion of the long-term unemployed. Women dominate every age group category of the unemployed except the 20-24 and over 55 categories. By November 1999, 56 percent of women still worked in the public sector. They make up the highest percentage of redundant workers. The number of self-employed women is still low and is dropping due to lack of opportunities and incentives.

The main research findings show that people are not motivated to take an active part in the privatization

process because it is not transparent enough and their initial positions are uneven. The privatization seriously affects the social and economic rights of some groups of people (as labor rights, rights to social security),

especially of some groups of women. Elements of discrimination were identified in the dynamic of the labor market towards young women, women after maternity leave, women with small children and women over 40. State protection and control in respect of

guaranteeing social-economic rights and guarding against discriminatory practices is insufficient. People's and especially women's awareness of the privatization processes and their guaranteed social and economic rights is low. A significant distrust of the judiciary was identified. State policies for the process of restructuring the economy is inadequate.

## How to balance the economic reforms and the social-economic rights of women

Among the major recommendations to the Bulgarian government, based on this research, is the adoption of indicators for periodical monitoring of the situation of women during economic restructuring. The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation insisted on finding a balance between the economic reforms and the social-economic rights of the population in its Alternative report presented at the 21st session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights last November in Geneva. We insisted also on giving priority to guaranteed citizens' rights in the process of negotiating with the international financial institutions. These recommendations were reflected in the Final observations of the Committee to the Bulgarian government.

The process of accession to the European Union is a good opportunity to exert pressure on the government for adopting adequate standards for and indicators to measure the impact of the situation on women. The Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation in collaboration with experts intends to elaborate such indicators. We aim to monitor the structure of women's employment and unemployment; the changes in the status of economically active women, gender gap in payment, social security, etc.; the changes in women's opportunities for equal participation in the economy and equal access to benefits from the resources.

In the process of further developing of these indicators we rely very much on the European Union and on support and partnership with NGOs from Bulgaria, the region and from the EU area.

*"... Countries undergoing transition have a unique political opportunity to improve the situation of women as an integral part of the successful transition to democracy and a true market economy. They can thereby avoid the entrenchment of structural discrimination and the need for further fundamental changes in the future..."*

*/ Recommendations to the government of the Republic of Bulgaria from the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women, February 1998/*



■ by Sanja Popovic-Pantic

**Is it possible to do business when an autocratic regime is in power?**

**T**he process of the violent breakdown of the former Yugoslav federation contributed to the economic destruction of the country and its isolation from the rest of the world. The NATO intervention brought immense destruction to economic and civil facilities. The total damage to the economy amounts to around \$29,6 billion.

The corrupt and autocratic regime in Serbia has created numerous obstacles to the development of free enterprise and the genuine process of privatization, as well as enforced predatory taxation. The government has not been able to provide the unemployed, the sick and the elderly with sustainable social safety network. Therefore, the political transition in the FR Yugoslavia has been closely linked to the economic transition and change towards economic development.

Women's positions in all aspects of life have been deteriorating since the situation in Yugoslavia flared up in 1990. **Women are becoming increasingly impoverished, apathetic, hopeless, incapable and unwilling to participate in decision making processes in society.** Certain categories of the employed and unemployed have been particularly affected: middle-aged women who are still officially employed in state-owned companies destroyed or damaged due to NATO intervention. Finding alternative employment is difficult for them because of their age and the shortage of openings in the labor market. The other target group consists of women employed in the private sector, which is struck by restrictive laws and increasing taxes. Both of these categories are officially employed but they and their families cannot live on \$20-30 wages (average per month). Educated middle-aged women suffer a further problem: lack of opportunity for self-realisation, leaving them feeling that nobody needs them anymore and considering themselves completely professionally "useless".

In order to encourage them to take an active part in all spheres, including political life, the most important step is to help them become financially independent. It is very hard to achieve this if we take into account that the poverty rate is now higher than ever before and almost 50 per cent of the

# Yugoslav Women Develop Extraordinary Survival Skills

population are registered unemployed. It is necessary to support those women's NGOs which deal with the economic status of women, helping them to find alternative ways to generate income and educating them in the principles of the market economy. A network of women's NGOs in the economic sphere is in the process of development. According to the latest data from the Directory of Women's Groups and Initiatives, published by Autonomni Zenski Info Center in Belgrade, there are 13 women's NGOs working for economic empowerment in Serbia. One of the most active is the Association of Business Women which counts around 100 members not only from

Belgrade, but also from other cities like: Novi Sad Kraljevo, Nis, Vrsac, Kikinda, Velika Plana, Subotica. Its activities include: motivating and recruiting women in local communities both unemployed and officially employed but unsatisfied with their economic position, offering education on the market economy, supporting female owners of small and medium-sized enterprises, and creating alternative ways of income generation. Although the percentage of women-owners has decreased in the past four years (from 33 per cent to 22 per cent in 1999 before the NATO bombing campaign), it is noticeable that women entrepreneurs and women in general in Serbia, express a strong will to overcome these difficulties. They participate in NGOs mostly in order to find alternative avenues for cross-border co-operation.

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November 1998 by the  
Association of Business  
Women of FRY; "Professional  
Women - for Better Women's  
Business Governance" started  
in February 1999 by the  
Association of Business  
Women of FRY; and "Creating  
an Alternative for Income  
Generation - Improving the  
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## What makes a woman decide to become an entrepreneur

The spirit of enterprise in Poland is generated largely by the economic transformation in combination with a high rate of unemployment among women and discrimination against them in the labour market. The latter manifests itself by employers being less inclined to hire women, by women finding it more difficult to gain promotion at work (the 'glass ceiling'), and by the fact that

business, she will be perceived and treated as either a business associate or a competitor to be reckoned with in one way or another. By the very fact of having her own enterprise, a woman automatically puts herself on an equal footing with men, and new opportunities open up before her. It is she and nobody else who conducts negotiations and she who is the decisive factor in the growth of her firm, her own place in it, and the level of income it generates for her. She has in her hands the opportunity to make decisions and influence many matters in her immediate and wider environments.

# WHAT

## it is like to be a woman-entrepreneur in Poland

The personal needs and economic factors which spark enterprising attitudes among Polish women

■ by Ewa Lisowska

**Ewa Lisowska, Ph.D.** - an economist and researcher in the Warsaw School of Economics, president of the International Forum for Women (an association of women managers and owners), editor in chief of the journal *Women & Business*. Author of articles and books on women entrepreneurs in Poland and other countries in transition.

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E. Lisowska (1995), *Women Business Proprietors in Poland*, *Women and Business*, No. 2-3.

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E. Lisowska (1998), *Entrepreneurship in the Face of Unemployment among Women and Discrimination against Them on the Labour Market*, *Women and Business*, No. 3-4.

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on average women earn about 25% less than men.

Then there are certain needs, which are important for women who decide to set up a business, like the need for self-determination, the need for participation in decision-making, the need to assert themselves in the professional arena, and to achieve measurable success. In the climate of economic transformation in Poland it is difficult for women to get into the highest paid management positions (scarcely 2 percent are currently occupied by women). Setting up in business, therefore, brings not only the opportunity for making independent decisions, but is also a way of breaking through the "glass ceiling". When a woman starts her own

Working for themselves gives women a chance to break out of a situation in which there are no opportunities or prospects for promotion, and to combat their unequal treatment in the labour market, particularly in the area of access to top positions and high earnings [Lisowska, 1996].

If a woman overcomes the various cultural barriers, then she copes well with problems, successfully develops her business, and derives great satisfaction from it.

It appears that far more women than ever before have the ability to run their own businesses. They have the right qualifications and predispositions, and are highly motivated. Easily available training facilities, loans on reasonable terms, and advisory help in the first year, could all be conducive to the liberation of the spirit of enterprise among unemployed women and those with a modest level of education too [Lisowska, 1998].

### Threats most often reported by the women entrepreneurs

The most frequently reported threats to the smooth-functioning of these businesses are constant changes in the regulations governing small and medium-sized firms, changes affecting taxation levels, tax breaks, and employment of staff.

Debt recovery is another major threat especially in view of the fact that Polish courts seem powerless to deal with it.





So, the barriers to women's enterprise lie mainly in the prevailing legal and economic conditions, namely: unclear and complicated, and frequently changing regulations that are often poorly adapted to the operational realities of enterprises, excessively high taxation and difficulty gaining access to credit finance for small enterprises.

Other barriers are associated with insufficient knowledge and business experience, and with the cultural conditioning, or traditional socialisation predominant in Polish homes and schools.

## What helps women advance as entrepreneurs?

The Centre for the Advancement of Women organized a training course over several months called Advancement of Businesswomen, with funding from the Southern Swedish Chamber of Commerce. Twenty eight female entrepreneurs travelled to Sweden to attend it. Training courses were provided within the International Forum for Women monthly meetings programme to keep women up-to-date on management, marketing, conducting negotiations, legislation, and psychology. For the last few months the International Forum for Women has also been running weekend training courses not only for its

members, but also for other women managers. Within the framework of the FIRMA 2000 Project born in Poland in 1998-2000 with the help of USAID finance, two training courses titled "Profession - Businesswoman" were held, and each attended by 110 women with their own business from all over Poland.

Women's organizations promote women, give them self-confidence and moral support, and combat cultural stereotypes of women, to enable them to exchange information and experiences, to initiate discussion about matters that are important to the firm, and to mediate in the establishment of business contacts both at home and abroad.

The competitiveness of small Polish enterprises and their opportunities for entering the markets of European Union countries becomes particularly important with reference to Poland's accession to the EU. Export of goods and services is rare among firms operated by women. They admit they find it difficult to enter foreign markets, though many would like to export. The government and its appropriate ministries should address these needs through instigating programmes which support small businesses in their drive to export.



## GENDER & DEVELOPMENT training centre

The Gender and Development Training Centre is organizing for the fourth time the successful:

**Advanced Course in Gender, Development and Organizational Change  
from Monday 15 January 2001 to Saturday 27 January 2001 in the Netherlands.**

The overall objective of the course is to deepen the knowledge of experienced gender experts concerning the ongoing gender and development debate. It aims to enhance their vision and skills in promoting processes of change towards gender equality at different institutional and organizational levels (from the family to the state). It will promote international networking between gender experts and explore strategies for gender-aware organizational change, based upon the experiences of the participants and the requirements of the organizations they are affiliated to. Applicants should be - male or female - development practitioners or have at least 4 years' experience in organizational strengthening or institutional change of which at least two years should have been spent on a gender-related assignment.

If you are interested or if you know people who might be interested, please let us know and we will send you the brochure and the application form by e-mail or post.

You can also download the brochure and application form from our website:

<http://www.gender-training.nl/>

**Please note that the deadline for applications is 15 November 2000  
and that participants need to arrange their own sponsorship.**

**Gender & Development Training Centre, Wilhelminastraat 18 2011 VM Haarlem, Netherlands**

**Tel: +31-23-5342149 Fax: +31-23-5312481/5513260**

**E-mail: [gen.dtc@inter.NL.net](mailto:gen.dtc@inter.NL.net)**

**[Http://www.gender-training.nl](http://www.gender-training.nl)**



**Interviewer:**

**You are a female film director - working, we may say, in a male-dominated business. However, you are successful and in your work one can feel the specific, female perception of reality, a woman's sensitivity in creativity. To what extent are women's issues interesting for you also as a theme?**

**Y.V.:**

I may say that they are getting more and more interesting for me. When I was young, after graduating from the Film Academy, I had a feeling that I needed to find my special themes, my visions, which at that stage were not necessarily connected with women. However, when I got older, over 30, this theme started to be more important for me. I started to realize that even films with female heroes were in a sense deformed in terms of understanding the woman's world and life. **Sometimes male directors succeed in reaching very close to the depth of the truth, but at certain point they stop and make compromises, turn back so as not to be in confrontation.** Indeed, I can understand this. They see it from the male perspective. Therefore, as I was gaining more and more experience as both a film director and a woman, I began to understand that a lot of themes are not properly worked out, some of them are overlooked or not discovered at all. For example, when I was shooting a documentary and I exposed a certain component touching upon a different angle of recognition, women's reactions were tremendous. This convinced me that women's vision is worthwhile speaking out about. So, I can say that these two elements are motivating me - my personal experience as a woman and the reaction of other women to my presentation of their problems. I told myself: why take care or concentrate on the so-called 'general themes', even if they are important to everybody, when I have discovered a whole new perception of life?

I was 'accused' of being a feminist quite early on and I was really shocked because at that time I did not know anything about feminists - and this is unfortunately still true of most people in Slovakia. They think of feminism as something horrible, militant, or even lesbian. After a certain amount of studying and traveling I came to the conclusion that in Slovakia, feminism was intentionally introduced in this meaning and, what is really bad and dangerous is that a lot of women still understand feminism in this interpretation. **And I think that many women here, in Slovakia, who are in fact**

**feminists are afraid to present themselves in this way due to the negative reactions of both women and men.**

This started to bother me over the last few years and provoked me to react, for example in my last film *Rings for a Lady*. This film is not about the 'terrible life of a woman,' but it demonstrates how a woman gradually transforms herself under certain circumstances to a vassal of her husband and even after his death she can never rid herself of the ties to her husband. That is why at the end of the film there is a

# How to achieve success in a male- dominated business

***"The important message is to believe in your abilities," says the successful Slovak film director - Yvonne Vavrova***

dedication to all women - past or present - who live or have lived like this. I was strongly criticized for that, but I did it on purpose, because otherwise the plot could be regarded as a story from the Middle Ages, not relevant to present-day conditions, and therefore with no impact today. And this is definitely not the case. Today's women even as we face the third millennium, still do not have their human and civil rights guaranteed or realized.

**Interviewer:**

**How do you think women get into this situation?**

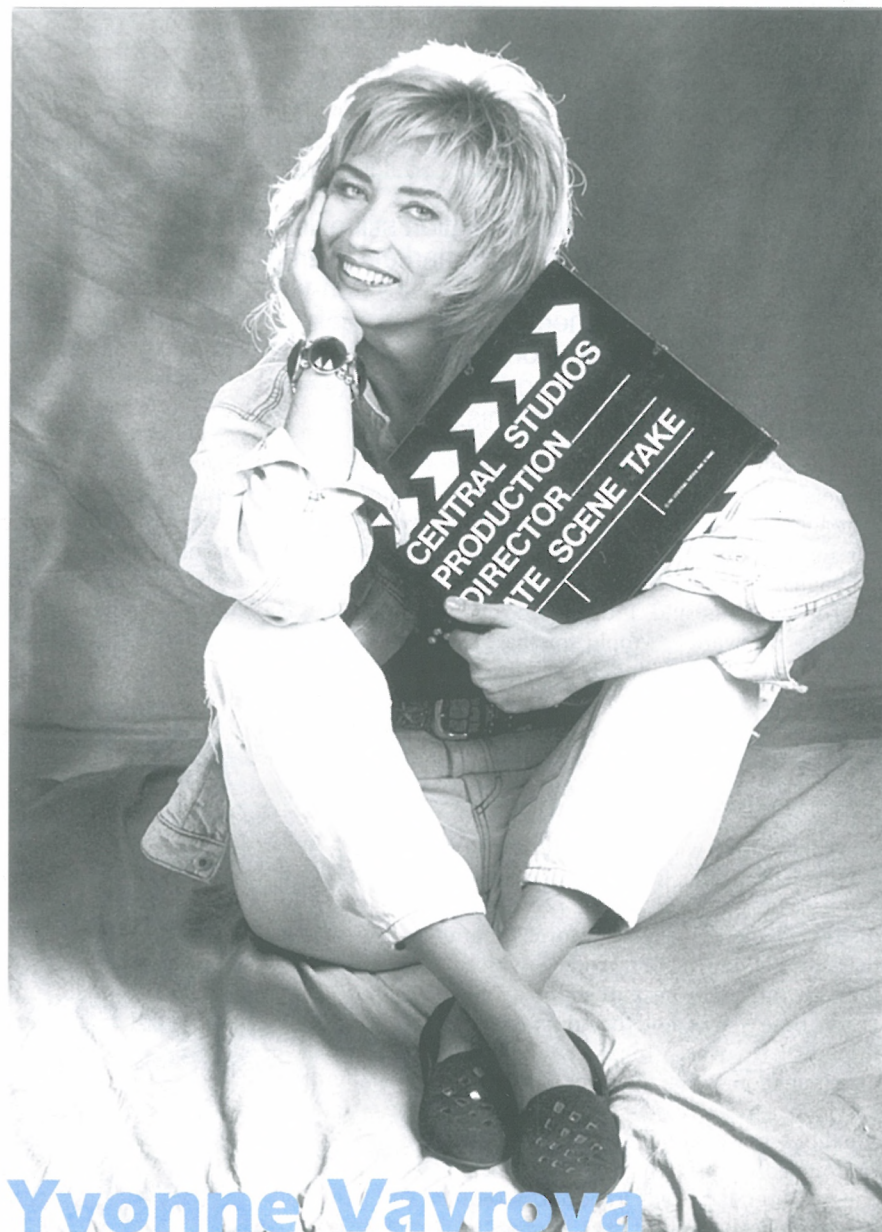


**Y.V.:**

That is a complicated question. **Women in Slovakia have very low self-esteem. But also in general, women have 50 per cent lower self-confidence than men.** A man could be old, fat and ugly but he would have the self-confidence to woo a woman in her 30s without qualm! This could never happen in reverse. Yes, a lot has to be done to raise women's self-esteem. In Slovakia, it is difficult to advocate for women. It always causes ironic responses from male counterparts. One of the tools to combat this situation is to raise the level of legal literacy and to introduce the problems of women

woman in a charge. In such incidents I try not to react, or overreact, but rather to overlook the negative approach or remarks. However, if the staff is dedicated to creative work this tension usually disappears. I am individualistic and independent, which is not practical in a way, nobody stands behind me. But on the other hand, I owe nothing to anybody.

**The important message is to believe in your abilities.** I was lucky that I travel a lot, so I am in contact with the professional world abroad, and this gives me strength to deal with the Slovak reality which is marked by inequality and disrespect in my professional field.



**Yvonne Vavrova**

gradually, in a very diplomatic way. This will be, indeed, a very long process in Slovakia.

**Interviewer:**

**How does the crew respect you as a female director?**

**Y.V.:**

In my profession, a woman's position is not easy, especially when you do not belong to a special lobbying group which supports you. I have worked with one cameraman, who simply could not stand there being a

**Interviewer:**

**Are you planning any particular project which will trace and depict the situation of women?**

**Y.V.:**

In feature films, what currently fascinates me is the theme of women's personalities. *Rings for a Lady* was the first film of this kind and I am planning to continue this conception, to follow this inspiration. As far as documentaries are concerned, I am planning to shoot a film on sexual harassment, on male and female principles in nature and society, and another on domestic violence.

**Interviewer:**

**As well as all your film work you are a businesswoman. How do you succeed in business?**

**Y.V.:**

I have to confess that I am interested in many different professions in addition to film directing. I am a photographer, a writer, and when I engage in all these different activities I have to organize myself. It often happens, when you have a business partner, this could shift or complicate your direction. When I was shooting the TV series *Prosperity Made in Japan*, I was representing four professions in one person: I was a writer, a director, a producer and a photographer, so I had everything under control. It was excellent because I was able to plan for example the finances for the shooting per se. So **managing several activities at a time** is possible for me, however only to a certain extent. What I really do not like is to look for funding which is a very difficult and frustrating job especially here, in Slovakia,

where you need to know key people, and lobby, and go to parties, and sometimes to play dirty political games. To get involved with politicians is what I really don't like. I have abandoned a few projects which were relying on that sort of contacts. **I have one principle, one solution - when there are too serious obstacles on the way, I leave the battle and start working in a different area of my interests, such as photography, or computer graphics, and this sphere of creativity enriches me in a new way.**



ASTRIDA NEIMANIS is a consultant on gender policy for the United Nations Development Program. She is also a guest lecturer on gender studies at the University of Latvia. She is currently serving on the board of Latvia's Coalition for Gender Equality and as Vice-President of Latvia's Association of Family Planning and Sexual Health. She is also a member of ASTRA (Eastern and Central European Women's Network for Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights).

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■ by Astrida Neimanis

# Who About would Latvian women dare who work to for less hire "for fun" her? for men

I was recently asked to lead a discussion about gender equality for a group of high school students in one of Latvia's provincial towns. We started the day by role-playing: I gave each group of students a specific gender related scenario and asked them to act it out for the rest of the group. In one, a woman goes to her boss asking for a rise because she has just

learned that she gets paid less than her male colleague despite the fact that they both do the same job. The group was great - they turned it

into a comic sketch, complete with farmers, milking buckets, tears, incredulity, a corrupt boss... In the end our heroine left with a slight pay-rise - although not as much as she had asked for.

The students and I discussed this scenario afterwards. "Would this be the likely outcome in real life?" I asked them. One girl raised her hand and confidently asserted, "No - we live in a democracy now. That sort of discrimination does not exist - at least not in the formal labor market."

Although it was a pleasure and a privilege to talk to such a bright, enthusiastic group of young people, it distressed me to have to inform them that the Latvian labor market - which they all hoped to be part of in a few years' time - was not the utopia they thought it was. In fact, gender discrimination within the labor market in Latvia is a priority concern for gender equality activists throughout the country. Undoubtedly, equal pay for equal work is one question that needs to be addressed. It is widely recognized that women in Latvia are not being paid on par with their male counterparts. While some statistics suggest that men earn 12 to 18 percent more than women in Latvia across the board, other data suggests there is a 10 Lat (\$17) per month difference in pay between man and women in the private sector. However, in a country where wages are often still paid 'under the table', and official reporting of actual salaries including 'bonuses' is expertly evaded by employers, it is an

unfortunate fact that precise figures on the wage differential are hard to come by. But one thing is certain: in every single estimate, women are getting the short end of the stick.

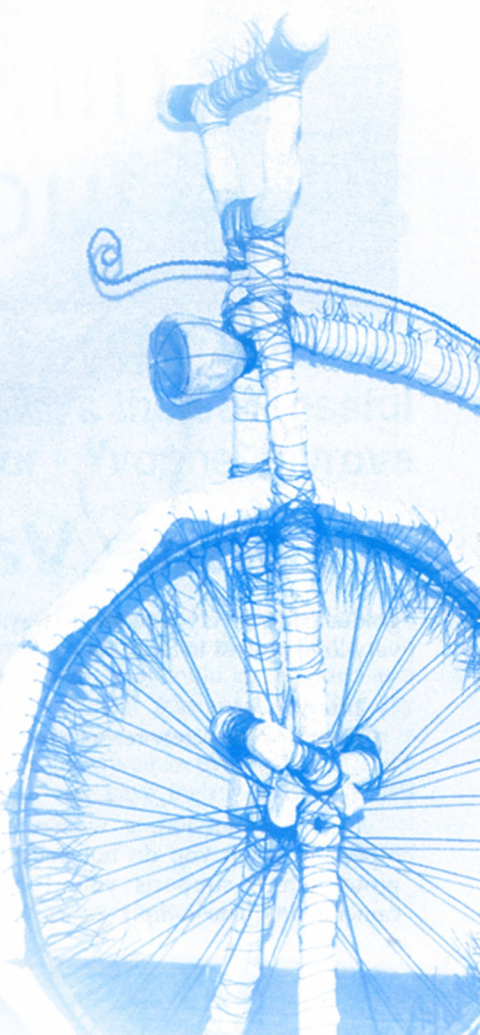
Given that hard statistics in this area are less than completely reliable, qualitative data and practical examples help to clarify the big picture. In a recent qualitative analysis of poverty in Latvia, reports from women looking for work were particularly distressing. "I applied for a managerial position at a factory - it was a well-paid job, and I had all the qualifications," one woman relates. "The factory was ready to take me on - but then they saw in my passport that I have five children. That was the end of it." She

explained that women with children have a very difficult time finding work in Latvia - employers assume that mothers will not be reliable workers.

Another woman reported being dismayed by an advert for office job which would 'suit' a 'young, pretty female worker with a nice figure and long legs' - not surprisingly, the woman feared her real qualifications would not be

**Gender discrimination still exists at the Latvian labor market. There is a "double standard" in the non-written employment regulations, which deprives women of their equality rights. Find out how it works with Astrida Neimanis.**

■ Monika Popova





valued. A 1998 survey of small-and-medium-sized enterprise employers substantiates these women's concerns: when asked what sort of employees these entrepreneurs would likely be hiring in the future, 'men' far outweighed 'women' in terms of responses. A recent article in a woman's magazine also highlights the situation of women in the workplace. One woman interviewed here tells of her experience at work: the (male) boss keeps a close eye on his female subordinates, while men are pretty much left to their own devices. Her boss apparently explains his preferential treatment of men as a matter of practicality: "The man is the head of the household, and he has his children to worry about!" - as though women were working purely for the fun of it.

These stories outline the unfortunate fact that

### **women in the Latvian labor market are not valued as much as men.**

This 'double standard' was the cause of much media attention at the beginning of the year when a woman in one of Latvia's eastern provinces learned that she was receiving 60 Lats for doing a machine job that her male colleagues were receiving 300 Lats to perform. Her employer, on the other hand, explained that this was a 'man's job,' and the woman was not holding her own - despite other reports to the contrary. The good news is that this woman took her employer to court on the grounds of sex-discrimination and won. In its ruling, the municipal court stated that it had based its decision on the International Labor conventions regulating working conditions and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (at the time, the new Latvian Labor Law, which explicitly outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex, had not yet come into force). This precedent-setting court case will hopefully encourage more women to fight for their rights - but more importantly, it should discourage employers from engaging in such discriminatory practices in the future.

When I told the students in my discussion group about this landmark ruling, some were impressed, and others were a bit surprised. But there was also a third reaction that cannot go unnoted: one student shrugged her shoulders and declared, "Yeah, well she's never going to be able to find another job now. Who would dare hire her?" The moral in this student's statement should ring a bell with all of us fighting for equal rights in the labor market: while it is crucial to fight legal battles like this, and while victories - however small - are meaningful, these struggles are viewed differently in the context of the society in which we live. It is equally important that legal work be accompanied by education, information and productive dialogue, so that stereotypical attitudes about women in the workforce - and men in family-life - can be broken down. We need to provide legal guarantees, but we also have to work to build a society in which women are not putting themselves, their careers, their livelihoods at risk by daring to ask for what is rightfully theirs. Only then can our goal of equal rights be truly realized.

# Femina Creativa

■ by Erika Papp

There is a town on the North of Serbia located at a crossroad of cultures and worlds near the Hungarian border: the Hungarians living here call it Szabadka, while the Croats and Serbs named it Subotica. It has long been known for its multi-ethnicity in a climate of tolerance and peaceful existence - and even more: for the skilled craftsmen and their marvellous work. The notion of entrepreneurship is not something recently invented in this region but is back in the limelight because of the worsening economy in Serbia and especially in the Vojvodina during the past ten years. It was not only the turbulent happenings in the region that forced most people to think differently after 40 years of allegedly "cosy" communist life, but also the ever decreasing possibilities for a decent everyday life and the ever-present threat of war and armed conflict still lingering in Serbia. A lot of people left the area, seeking their fortune either in the neighbouring countries or elsewhere in the world. Those who stayed, once hoping for a better future and new possibilities, slowly began to lose faith and optimism and sink into apathy. In a country where human life has no value, where safety and security have become abstract concepts, changes

**Erika Papp** studied English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Yugoslavia's Novi Sad University, in 1981 and attained a post-graduate qualification at the Association of Scientific Translators of Serbia, Belgrade in 1982. From May 1998 until April 1999 she was program co-ordinator at the Subotica Open University of programs for civic education, democracy building, non-violent conflict resolution, human and children's rights and youth issues. In April 1999 she left for Budapest to work as an associate for the Hungarian Peace Association and the European House. Since returning to Subotica in late June that year she has been working as a teacher of English at the Subotica Grammar School.

Since September 1999 she has been an active member of the Women's Network 2020 as a Yugoslav co-ordinator for women's rights. Since November 1999 she has been working on issues of women from minorities and their role in peace building, with the Karat Coalition. She is a member of the Agency/Center for Local Democracy (the net of offices of the Council of Europe); Women's Studies and Creativity; Terra's Natural Food Association; Femina Creativa, the Association for the Economic Empowerment of Women, Subotica;

Transeuropeennes, Paris; the Hungarian Peace Association, Budapest.

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# Femina Creativa

are expected to come "out of the blue."

Despite these challenges, there is a small group of women who, not so long ago, decided to take a step forward and overcome the despair so heavily burdening all like activities in Subotica/Szabadka. They established the Women's Studies and Creativity gathering - a group of intellectual and businesswomen. Lectures and workshops followed one after the other and after a short time the tiny office of the organization could not accommodate all the women eager to do something. Simply having a good 'chat' and spending a pleasant hour meant a lot in those troubled times.

Some of these activities ceased for a month or so during the NATO bombing campaign but as soon as the situation calmed down in September, the women got back together again working on a new strategy for actions. Femina Creativa started out as a project for about 20 women entrepreneurs who wanted to improve and widen their knowledge in organizing business. This project was so successful that at the end of the three-month course, the participants decided to establish an independent organization focusing on the economic empowerment of women. The organization was registered in March 2000 but the activities were continuous: until the first funds came in April the facilitators held workshops for free!

From early March until the end of May, five workshops were held, most of them dealing with the most efficient organization of business under the unfavourable conditions in Serbia. Women owners of small, private, mostly family businesses attended. These weekly meetings were indeed interactive, as the women participants could discuss and consult the experts on their specific issues and everyday difficulties. Besides the practical workshops three psychological workshops were devoted to strengthening of the self-confidence under the title: Minimal Positive Changes - Go for Them!

The number of communication workshops in English reached 10 by mid-June and the participants, besides improving their English language skills, widened their practical knowledge in organizing meetings, conferences and presenting themselves, their organizations and their work. The Femina Creativa team organized its first seminar on April 15, 2000 within the Women's Forum Project which involved an additional five towns from all

over Serbia. The seminar/workshop focused on women and entrepreneurship and was organized with the valuable support of Fuada Stankovic, PhD, from the Centre for Women's Entrepreneurship and Management, Novi Sad. Other guests to the seminar included Laurence Hovde (Zene na delu, Belgrade) as well as local government representatives and the Belgrade Chamber of Economy.

This multiethnic seminar was attended by more than 40 women (representing over 15 civil organizations) from the whole Vojvodina region (Novi Sad, Senta, Kikinda, Vrsac, Becej, etc.). Among the conclusions was the need to support diversity, talent and expertise of women through education in entrepreneurship. Women's economic independence is one of the vital prerequisites for social change and it is also a presumption for the equal status of women within our society and for the full respect of their fundamental human rights.

On June 24, 2000 the Femina Creativa team organized another workshop within the Women's Forum and with the assistance of the Adizes Southeast Europe Institute from Novi Sad. The topic was organizing the life cycle in an association (profit- or non-profit-making). Together with the Adizes experts, the participants discussed the problems, issues and difficulties in organizing their everyday work. Twenty four business people - men and women - and representatives of non-profit-making organizations from Subotica attended this seminar.

As experienced activists, the Femina Creativa team helps other organizations and groups in their activities. There is good cooperation with the women from Tavankut, a small village near

Subotica/Szabadka, who cherish the old traditions of straw forming. They usually gather each summer and have a week-long colony, creating marvellous art works from straw. During the past few years the destiny of this colony has always been uncertain. This year, Femina Creativa assisted them in the fundraising and with the kind support of OXFAM

Belgrade office they were able to organize

this traditional colony with participants from Hungary and Croatia as well.

There is no lack of strength, hope, ideas, plans and willingness, nor are scarce funds a crucial problem any more. It is the restricted space for the activities of NGOs that is getting more and more limited each day. Civil organizations might face a troublesome and difficult period ahead, whereas the unpredictable political milieu is just part of the problem. The core issue is how to mobilize and how to include more and more women in activities. The Femina Creativa model of education, training and networking is proving to be one of the positive examples in this process.

## Our partners in these activities were:

The Center for Entrepreneurship and Management, Novi Sad  
The Association of Business Women, Belgrade  
Adizes Southeast Europe Institute, Novi Sad  
The European Movement in Serbia, Belgrade  
Civic Initiatives, Belgrade  
The Roma Cultural Center, Subotica  
La Benevolencija, Subotica,  
Subotica Local Government  
The Karat Coalition  
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# HOT SPOT

*"World Exhibitions are like a Disneyland for adults - especially male adults - they have a tendency to focus on the latest sophistications of technology and highly professionalised presentations," is what Rut Kolinska from Prague said while visiting Expo 2000 in Germany this summer. "What women need to know and need to contribute in order to face the challenges of the 21st century is that solutions lie in people, not in technology."*

**R**ut Kolinska, from the environmentalist group Prague Mothers, represents one of the 42 groups from around the world

participating in the GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY (GWIA). GWIA is organized by the National Association of German Mother Centers and their international affiliations to ensure the presence of women's 'knowledge from the ground' at Expo 2000. Humankind, nature and technology, the three mottos of Expo 2000 need to be in harmony to create sustainable development. What these grassroots women's groups have found in their work is that when these three aspects remain connected to the community level, development stays balanced. Grassroots women's groups deal with everyday life issues and their family and neighborhood ties. Women have an important role to play that is increasingly recognized by international agencies. When women take leadership roles in local development, corruption is reduced and solutions that

address basic needs are what keeps our cities alive. These initiatives are often not acknowledged by institutional actors when resources are being distributed. Their successes are acquired and repackaged into institutional channels with neither credit nor authorship going to the grassroots initiators. The mission of the Grassroots Women's Academy is to create a reflective space for groups to articulate and share the abundance and sophistication of their practices, join forces and claim ownership in harvesting the lessons they have learned, and produce a basis for dialogue with mainstream partners.

*"It is important to have international peer learning and transfer systems. It is important that grassroots women be initiators of their own information and horizontal and vertical transfers, rather than receivers and beneficiaries of the training, programs and capacity building of institutions and the*

## Practising Solutions Instead of Debating Theories

### The Grassroots Women's International Academy at Expo 2000

■ by Monika Jaeckel



**Monika Jaeckel,** 1949, degree in sociology from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt/Main, senior researcher at Deutsches Jugendinstitut, Munich, in the Department on Family Policy. Founder of the German Mother Center movement. Chair of the Huairou Commission Our Best Practices Task Force.

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are harmonious with the whole community as well as with the natural environment are developed.

The Women's Academy is a series of four one-week events to link grassroots and professional expertise in a format that enables transfer and replication.

*"Women are at the core of communities. There is immense wisdom and know-how to be found in the daily survival strategies of neighborhood women. GWIA has been an opportunity to identify the ideas, concepts, processes and strategies that are the seeds of change. We experienced practices from the South as well as the North and the East where grassroots women are taking leadership roles in their communities, in redefining progress and development and in redistributing the use of resources"* was how Sandy Schilen from GROOTS (Grassroots Women Organizing Together in Sisterhood), summed up her experience of the first two GWIA weeks.

Grassroots groups are often already practising solutions on the ground while others are debating theories. **Vibrant actions taken by poor communities to**

*international development industry,"* says Dorothee Schooss from the German GWIA team.

### Where unemployment is the rule community networks work out solutions

The mother center movement itself symbolizes how a grassroots initiative has developed international proportions and speaks to women's groups facing the challenges of recreating and sustaining community networks in the North as well as in the East and the South:

*"In a situation where the social fabric of our society has been torn apart, where unemployment is the rule and employment the exception, where poverty and ill-health is wide-spread you need to reweave social networks just as much as you need to rebuild the houses and the infrastructure of our cities, which have been destroyed. Mother Centers*





► *are exactly what we need in this respect", says Mirella Mulalic Handan, from Bosnia.*

At the end of each of GWIA week, the results of the workshops and training are brought to the round table of partner dialogues which include different players in mainstream society (foundations, academia, government, international agencies, churches, and the private sector).. In a respectful dialogue, taking into consideration the scope of each partner, ways of building sustainable partnerships between grassroots groups and institutional partners are debated.

## Grassroots groups in Central and Eastern Europe

In the preparatory GWIA week in 1999 with grassroots groups from Central and Eastern European countries, several

know much about each other, about our environment, our community. Officially there were no problems, so there was no need to create solutions. It was only after the revolution that we became aware of all the social problems in our society. The information about the dramatic situation of abandoned children in foster homes run by the government hit us at the same time it hit the international community. Only after the revolution did the necessity to build associations become visible and only then was it possible. That is why all the NGOs were created after the transition. That is why people are so eager now to help, to join NGOs, to care for the community and to change society." (Romania)

Taking responsibility for community issues for many groups means to participate in local governance.

*"To be able to make a difference and make changes without doing party politics is what I find attractive in our work. In this way we are*

*explain to them how the people are living. Many of them have no idea. Now many officials in our administration are more understanding."* (Russia)

*"In the last years several women from our centers have actually run for office in local government. There are several issues we are lobbying for, legislation that needs reform, resources for self-help initiatives. We engage in local governance independent from political parties."* (Czech Republic)

## Strengthening family ties

Issues that Grassroots women's groups in Central and Eastern European countries are concerned with often relate to the family. Many express the belief that the institution of the family was weakened during socialism and that now it is important to rebuild the confidence and competencies of it.

■ In Romania, Grassroots women's groups are concerned with re-establishing and protecting families, helping them stay together, and finding ways to solve their own problems instead of sending children into foster homes. They also offer childcare for children who would otherwise be unattended at home or hanging out on the streets.

■ In Moscow, mothers groups are addressing issues relating to handicapped children and creating mutual support networks that are also reaching out to other parents.

■ In the Ukraine, activities are focused on programs with children and improving the quality of family life.

■ In Bosnia, Grassroots women's groups are addressing the issues of childbirth and early maternity, family relations and family planning. They are taking the lead in rebuilding childcare services, which were completely destroyed by the war.

■ The Soldiers' Mothers in St. Petersburg have organized themselves as mothers to protect and support their sons.

■ In the Czech Republic the Prague Mothers actively address health issues of their children combating by air pollution.

## Counteracting fear and gaining confidence in the power structures

The importance of addressing and dealing with fear and intimidation in Central and Eastern European Countries was also a common issue. How to counteract fear and gain confidence in power structures was seen as an important part of overcoming the



common threads and issues became apparent which strengthened interest and motivation for regional networking.

## Reviving the tradition of civil associations

In all countries the tradition of civil associations and groups was discontinued during the communist regime. The state and the party were in charge of everything and initiatives or self-help projects among the people were discouraged. Social problems were denied, there was no uncensored information.

*"We were living together, but did not*

*also good role models for our children."* (Czech Republic)

*"As a young woman before the transition I did not think about politics, I never thought about society. But when things changed and I came into the mother center I realized: hey, it is possible to do something. All the active women in the center fascinated me and before long I also learned to take steps and be part of the solution. We have changed the whole childcare system in our town."* (Former German Democratic Republic)

*"We have become active in our community. We inform people about their rights, i.e. that they are entitled to social security. We also work with the politicians,*



"socialist mentality." The legacy of the communist regime was described as a big gap between people in power and the population. A culture of distance and intimidation often still prevails. This needs to be confronted on both sides. An important part of the Grassroots women's work is to rebuild self-confidence and trust in the power of the people.

*"A system where there is such a big power gap between the people in power and the population makes a very unstable society and in the end it is self-destructive. Where does the system get power from? From the fear of the people. Therefore we find it very important in our work to focus on the issue of fear and intimidation, to help understand how fear works and how it can be overcome." (Russia)*

## The importance of claiming space

There are some common threads in methods and approaches that the Grassroots women's groups from Central and Eastern Europe found effective in their work.

All stressed the importance of claiming space, of having their own premises.

*"People need a place to meet. They need a place of their own to identify with as their space. Continuity comes with having your own premises. Huge bank buildings are empty because of bankruptcy. We want to reclaim them for community centers. We don't need buildings for money, we need buildings for people. In times of crisis people need to learn to be together." (Bulgaria)*

Another aspect that became evident in the work of Grassroots women's groups was their value-based approach.

*"Love, family, dignity, well-being and peace. That is what we are all working for. In our work we want to touch the hearts of people, we want to learn to live together in peace and tolerance, we want to relearn the art of caring for each other, of helping each other" (Bosnia)*

One method that was seen as very effective was the method of testimony or story telling.

*"People open up when they hear the stories of others. We work almost exclusively with this method: This is what*

*happened to me and this is how I came out of it. People believe more when they hear authentic stories." (St. Petersburg)*

*"What we do in our centers is create a comfortable space where parents can listen to each other and hear each other's stories. Informal exchanges like that create the atmosphere of trust that is so important." (Romania)*

## The side effects of migration

Poverty and war have created a big wave of migration from Central and Eastern European countries into Western Europe. What became evident in this workshop was that a side effect of migration is a process of cross-pollination and networking that is instrumental in helping Europe grow together.

In this workshop refugees and migrant women who have joined German mother centers met women from their home countries. This encounter was very moving and showed huge potential for solidarity and networking. Refugee women now living in Germany have not forgotten their origins and have a great deal of motivation to support projects in the countries they have migrated from. In the case of Bosnia, German legislation obliges many refugees to return to their country. What became evident in this workshop is that many women return with the intention of taking with them

what they experienced and learned during their stay in Germany for the benefit of the development of their countries.

A young Bosnian midwife returning to her country after being a refugee in Berlin, where she received training through working in the House for Natural Birth, initiated the project Felix in Sansei. Refugee women who found a "home away from home" in German mother centers expressed their determination to create a mother center in their hometowns on their return.

*"At the mother center I met women who were dealing with the same problems I was dealing with: screaming children, housework that never seems to end and the feeling of being left alone with it all. In the mother center I felt welcome, in the mother center I found friends."*

*In three months I have to return to Bosnia. I have gathered so much information, inspiration and strength here I will not be going empty handed. I am determined - even if it starts in some rooms in a cellar - to found a mother center in Bosnia and I know I can count on help from the women there. And now I have even met other women from other towns in Bosnia at this workshop who are starting mother centers, so I know I will not be alone." (Refugee from Bosnia)*

*"I came into the mother center because they were offering a German course. But what intrigued me was that this course was combined with a course preparing us to be 'hosts' in the mother center, so we knew we would have follow-up jobs in the mother center if we so wished, following the course. I think that for migrant women the possibility to earn money in the mother centers is very important. In the years I have been in the center I have noticed that migrant women join the center differently to German women. Many German women come first as visitors and then after a while take on responsibilities and jobs in the mother center." (Refugee from Kazakhstan)*

The two remaining GWIA weeks are scheduled for Sept 13 - 19 and Oct 10 - 16.

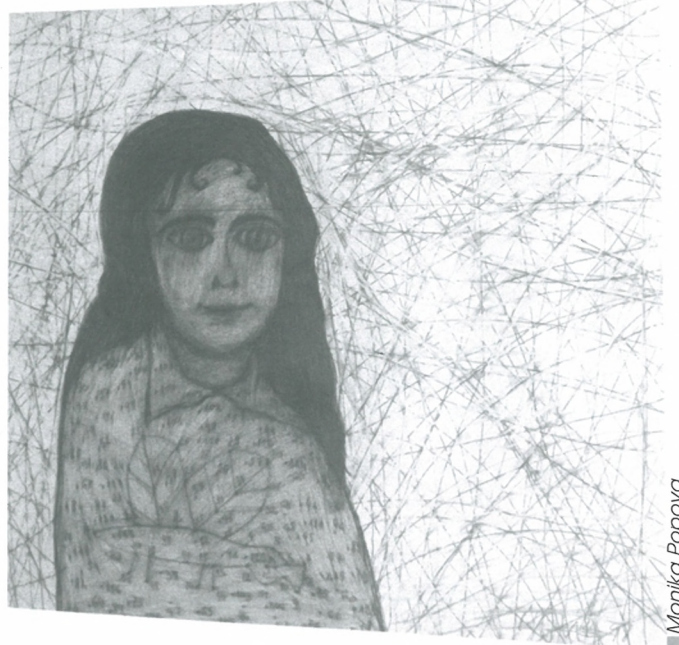
The focus will be on: "Redesigning Education" (Sept) and "Redefining Roles and Reallocating Resources" (Oct). Grassroots women's groups will be present from Ireland, Cameroon, Russia, South Africa, the Philippines, Bosnia, USA and Uganda.





# Employed by ...the Global Sex Industry

■ by Barbara Limanowska



Monika Popova

**T**rafficking in women from Eastern Europe is crime many international organizations are united in fighting. The International Labor Organization, the International Organization of Migration, the Council of Europe and the European Union work together to draw up action plans to combat it. They focus primarily on encouraging the countries of origin to undertake preventive actions such as public information campaigns on the dangers of illegal economic migration. Unfortunately, however, these plans don't address the real roots of the problem. The issue of trafficking is also becoming a priority for police forces combating organized crime, although too often their only strategy is to limit women's freedom of movement within Europe.

The experience of NGOs working in this field shows that in many cases women who decide to work abroad are neither duped nor kidnapped, but are in fact fully aware that they might be offered a job in the sex industry. The majority of them are women who have agreed to work as prostitutes or housekeepers or sweatshop workers, and were subsequently cheated by intermediaries or by their employers after they had begun to work. I believe that most of these women are not, and have never been, 'victims' of trafficking as it is often presented in prevention materials and articles in popular media.

They know that the sex industry is almost the only place where a woman from Eastern Europe without work experience and knowledge of foreign

languages can find work. They accept that not because they are naive, but because they know it is the only way they can make it in the West and earn the money they need. They are willing to take chances.

One definition of trafficking, which is too narrow, bypasses these women's

**Women are sometimes fully aware that they will be turned into sex slaves if they choose to job-hunt abroad, but they still go for it. Barbara Limanowska attempts to explain why, and to suggest various levels of action against trafficking in her presentation at the ECE UN Human Rights Panel, Geneva, July 1999.**

experiences and even their very existence. These women badly need protection, because they are often exploited, forced to work, don't have legal job contracts and live in fear of the police. Creating policies which ignore this group is simply not effective enough, and may even be harmful: it divides women into those who must be helped - the 'real victims' - and those there is no point bothering with - 'those who deserve it'.

It seems to me that it is a mistake to focus on trafficking in women and children as a narrow and separate issue, especially if focusing on the sex industry as the only area in which trafficking occurs. This approach fosters sensationalism and fails to address the problem in the framework of human rights. When we speak from the perspective of trafficking alone, we cannot effectively address the problems which are at its roots: discrimination, lack of opportunities, poverty. Trafficking is indeed an alarming problem but

kidnapping is already illegal. What is flourishing without much censure is the economic manipulation of women in the new social order. It is easier to arouse outrage by anti-prostitution campaigns than to construct policies that criticize the unregulated flow of capital and confront women's further loss of social power both at work and at home.

It certainly does not help to use a crime prevention approach which is designed to protect society from crime, and in the case of "trafficking" to protect national borders and not people, even if they are victims. In consequence, it is very often the least powerful - illegal migrant women, prostitutes - who pay the highest price: they are arrested, deported, banned from entering Western countries and branded criminals.

According to one interpretation of trafficking the waves of sudden interest in combating this problem - especially from government agencies and church organizations - are often not effective in identifying and punishing those guilty of the crime, but only serve to stem migration of women and contribute to their victimization.

This was the case in the beginning of the 20th century, with the migration of women from Europe to the American continent (so-called white slavery). And it is the case today, when women from Asia, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are trying to get in to the countries of Western Europe and North America. And as it was then, it is all done today in the name of protecting innocent and naive victims. Anti-trafficking



policies can be used as anti-migration policy if human rights standards are not applied and women's human rights are not protected.

If the rights of women are to be taken seriously and effectively protected, trafficking cannot be seen as a separate issue, and actions against it cannot reduce women's access to safe and secure means of migration, to decent employment and education.

The human rights approach allows us to look at the areas where human rights violations occur - traveling and working conditions, cases of involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive), forced labor, involuntary movement, slavery-like practices, etc.

To be able to really prevent trafficking we need to reframe it, and to look at it not as a separate problem but as the most visible and extreme result of women's general inequality in society. Examining trafficking within a human rights framework, we can address its real roots.

## The conditions that encourage women to migrate

are extremely high rates of poverty and illiteracy, as well as general social, economic and political discrimination. These issues are the states' responsibilities to address. States should ensure that women enjoy all their human rights - civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. They should also protect victims of human rights violations. We should also keep in mind the strong impact of globalization on the societies and markets in Eastern Europe. Its highly gender-conscious nature is a main concern for human rights.

## There are two levels at which action against trafficking should be taken

At the first level measures should be taken "to protect and promote respect for the human rights of individuals who have been victims of trafficking, including those who have been subjected to involuntary servitude, forced labor and/or slavery-like practices. They should protect the rights of trafficked persons by providing them with effective legal remedies, legal protection, non-discriminatory treatment, and restitution, compensation and recovery" (Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons, 1999).

At another level there is a great need for preventative measures. Under international law, states have a duty to respect and ensure respect for human rights, including the duty to prevent violations. Prevention should include protecting human rights of women in their home countries (including social, economic, cultural as well as civil and political rights): equal access to education, equal access to employment, equal pay for equal work, reproductive and sexual rights, political representation and the implementation of equal status policy. Feminization of poverty in the global economy and the impact of globalization on women in general, must also be addressed.



■ by Sonja Dragova  
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# Hard to be Young

Everybody says: "Young people are the future of Bulgaria". But will there be any young people left in this country soon? Most of my friends went abroad after university. Some went to European countries, others - to the United States. They were forced to by the economic situation. They are nice people - intelligent, clever, determined and well bred. They dream of succeeding in their chosen professions, of having families and securing a good standard of living for their children. Is that really so much to ask? No, it is not. On the eve of XXI century these wishes are entirely normal and reasonable they are not a whim, but a necessity, a start, which allows someone to live and develop as a person and a professional.

Unfortunately, in the time of transition these dreams are difficult to achieve. My country is suffering. It is in economic crisis, which influences in a way all spheres of social life - culture, education, values, morality.

The crisis in Bulgaria, including unemployment, weak production, high criminality and lack of funds and prospects, robs our youth. Young people are forced to grow old prematurely. They cannot enjoy their youth. Our generation cannot work where we want to work, to travel, to amuse ourselves, to feel free and relaxed, because we are not well paid and we are under mental strain. Poverty is not only an economic problem; it has serious psychological consequences. It affects our minds, makes us lose self-confidence, and creates a sense of helplessness and pessimism.

It is so sad to see young people who feel unhappy and burdened with worries. Young people are confronted with serious existential problems. The question we are faced with in the first place is related to our professional realization. It seems that good education, professional competence and diligence are not enough to find a good job. So we are forced to look abroad.

With this crisis comes the dilemma: do you look for contentment abroad and leave my country in the lurch? Or do you stay at home and try to be of use? I could never be sure to what extent my potential will be used if I stayed here. I think that the government must create conditions which encourage young people not to leave, because we are the one and only hope for Bulgaria.

I love Bulgaria and my family and I do not want to leave. I think you can only truly be happy in the country where you were born and where your relatives are; where you fell in love for the first time, where you have loved and suffered. But on the other hand people live only once. You never know when you will die, so you want to get as much as possible from life. Both alternatives have advantages and shortcomings and require many efforts and sacrifices.

The word crisis does not only have a solely negative meaning. "Crisis" can mean a change, a new opportunity. Every problem is an indicator of the need for change and development, therefore I view the crisis in Bulgaria as a challenge. The hard economic conditions demand readiness to give the best of yourself and a strong will to work hard. Suffering and hardships develop the strength of mind, they make people stronger and more able to survive.

I would like to encounter this challenge bravely and overcome it, using my intellectual power, creativity and will. I believe Bulgaria has a future and I want to be part of it..



>>> global

## "We, the women of Europe and America say: 'No more war, no more bombs'."

This was the concluding paragraph of the Declaration of the European and North American Region NGOs, presented to the **United Nations General Assembly on June 9, 2000**. The first draft of the declaration concentrated only on the problems of women from the North, without mention of women's issues in this region. After intervention by Barbara Limanowska and Kinga Lohmann from KARAT, the final version included many problems of women from Eastern and Central Europe. This declaration is now an official UN document.

Francoise David in particular, President of the Federation des Femmes du Quebec, set out the following:

>>> The demand for parity, institutional mechanisms to guarantee women's right to equality, adequate financial resources in government budgets, specialized UN agencies and regional bodies for the organizations that defend women's human rights and support women who need it.

>>> The demand for action against increased poverty among women everywhere in our region, especially in Eastern Europe, where economies are in the process of change and their liberalization has caused a brutal downward spiral of people's living conditions.

>>> The demand for jobs for all, a social security net, salaries that allow a decent standard of living, State support of women's entrepreneurship and protection of labor laws but also an easy access to unionization and the recognition of women's unpaid work. In the context of globalization, when even life becomes an object and a commodity, women's poverty simply increases the profits of the multinationals that have no scruples. As an example, thousands of Eastern European women are lured into underground networks with promises of jobs in the West. They are exploited, humiliated and detained without glimmer of recourse against their aggressors.

### UNGASS Outcome Document

>>> This document states that, although there has been increased recognition of the gender dimensions of poverty, there has also been a widening of the economic inequality gap between men and women. Governments are called upon to incorporate a gender perspective into the design, development, adoption and execution of all budgetary processes and undertake socio-economic policies promoting sustainable development and ensuring poverty eradication programmes especially formulated for women.

>>> While globalization has brought greater economic opportunities and autonomy to some women, it has further marginalized others. While there has been increased participation of women in the labour market, many women still work in the rural areas and informal economy as subsistence producers and in the service sector with low levels of income and job security. In that light governments agreed to create and

ensure equal access to social protection systems, to provide safeguards against the uncertainties and changes in work conditions associated with globalization, and strive to ensure that new, flexible and emerging forms of work are adequately covered by social protection.

>>> There has also been a growing acceptance of the importance to society of women having full participation in decision-making and positions of power at all levels. The document calls for the creation of favourable conditions to encourage women to go into politics through such means as their nomination through political parties, quotas or other appropriate means for election to parliaments and other legislative structures, to increase their share and contribution in the formulation of public policy.

>>> After accepting that violence against women and girls, whether in public or in private constitutes a human rights violation, governments agreed, as a matter of priority, to review, introduce and strengthen legislation to handle all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape and sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, economic exploitation, female infanticide, crimes committed in the name of honour or passion, racially motivated crimes, abduction and sale of children. They also decided to treat all forms of violence against women and girls of all ages as criminal offences punishable by law.

>>> global

### KARAT at the United Nations:

In the first issue of Fair Play we told you about KARAT's preparation activities for the UN General Assembly's 23rd Special Session "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty first Century" in New York, June 3-9, 2000. Copies and reprints of Fair Play were given to government delegations from our region, to UN officials, to women's organizations and networks, and to journalists attending the session. The magazine generated huge interest.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the UN, KARAT managed to send representatives to this important international event, with kind donations from the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute. Some of us attended as members of official delegations of states: Valentina Bodrug-Lungu (Moldova), Pavlina Filipova (Bulgaria), Zuzana Jezerska (Slovakia), Michaela Marksova-Tominova and Lenka Simerska (Czech Republic), which facilitated our collaboration with government representatives.

KARAT organized a sub-regional Caucus of NGO representatives from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Kinga Lohmann presented a Sub-regional Alternative Report for Central and Eastern Europe during the Open Plenary NGO Session (June 5). It outlines three areas of concern, which distinguish particularly the CEE sub-region: institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, women and economy, women and armed conflict. This does not mean that other issues were perceived as less important.

The Political Statement denounces the efforts of some governments to undermine and weaken the rights stated in the Beijing Platform for Action. We also voiced our concern about the lack of transparency of the 23rd UN Special Session's >



>process and especially about the limited possibilities for NGO participation.

## International communication network

Lenka Simerska on behalf of KARAT was a member of the editorial board of Women Action Daily News and the European Women Action web site. The Daily News was distributed to the NGOs and the delegates every day during the UN GASS and is available on the Internet:

<http://www.womenaction.org/>. Longer texts about the work of Karat are also available at this address (e.g. the Political Statement and the Statement of Concerns). The European section of the Women Action contains also reports of the KARAT member states and other information from the Sub-region.

## >>> global

### Only one landmark

Women (and some men) came in record numbers as they did for the World Conference on Women in Beijing - proving once more that this is an issue central to people's lives and passions. The Beijing Platform for Action was reaffirmed and governments again pledged that it is their responsibility to work towards its implementation. While there were not as many specific targets set and resources allocated as many of us sought, there were concrete advances that can be built upon as we work to implement the platform and to hold governments accountable for all their commitments to women. It is important to remember that Beijing is only one landmark and that women must also utilize and address other UN conference documents and human rights treaties - such as the Women's Convention - that are binding obligations.

The Beijing + 5 Review had its highs and lows, but it provided one more opportunity for public discussion of many issues that affect and concern women. Because of this event, the media has aired issues locally and globally - showing the importance of women as a constituency for the UN. Most governments made reports on what they are doing to implement the platform, and many women engaged them in debates about what needs to be done through alternative reports and vehicles. Women used the space to network and share strategies across cultural, racial, sexual, national, and other boundaries. It is women who have placed women's empowerment and human rights on the world's agenda utilizing events like the UN World Conferences as well as many other strategies. This has been one more moment in which women have demonstrated their determination and leadership in working to realize justice and full human rights for all women in all our diversity.

Joint statement of the Center for Women's Global Leadership  
Women's Environment and Development Organization  
(WEDO)

## >>> regional

## European Women

## Action 2000

<http://www.iav.nl/european-womenaction-2000/>

In June 2000, the United Nations reviewed the agreements made at the 4th World Conference on Women - the so-called Beijing + 5 review. European WomenAction 2000 has been designed to help women prepare for and participate in the process.

European WomenAction 2000 (EWA) is an information and communication network which empowers NGOs to participate in global strategies to enhance the position of women, starting with the review process of the Beijing Platform for Action. EWA is part of the Global WomenAction 2000 (<http://www.womenaction.org>) and covers the region of Europe and North America and Israel within the global network. The KARAT Coalition provides EWA with information about women in Central and Eastern Europe and, with the help of local NGOs and networks, also from the former Soviet Union. What can you find at the EWA web site? You can join the review of the Beijing Platform for Action, you can access your government's national report or its UN questionnaire. You can get information on how to create an alternative national report and when the relevant events and regional meetings are. There are also links, 'background' and 'action' resources and sections on all 'you should know'. You can also participate in the critical discussions about the implementation of the Platform of Action and the situation of women within the 12 critical areas. The KARAT Coalition started an online discussions [karatbeijing+5] on the following topics: prostitution and trafficking in women, domestic violence, women in political decision-making, women as minorities. The discussion (moderated by Ildiko Biro from the KARAT Coalition - Hungary) was organized to create a basis for further analyses of the situation of women in our region. The summaries from every topic are available.

Through EWA you can also connect to discussion groups held by other networks. It can be region-based (e.g. European Women's Lobby - Women and Employment in the European Union, or US Women Connect - End Violence Against Women; Women's Economic Security and Justice; Women's Power and Decision-Making; Women's Health & Reproductive Rights; Women and Girls' Education and Training; etc.). There are also open discussions which are not based on regions. For example, 'Women and Media' facilitated, moderated and advised by members of the Global Women Action 2000 network:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/forum/media/media.htm>;  
alternative report on women and media at

<http://www.womenaction.org/csw44/altrepeng.htm>)

As well as the online discussions and web-based information services, EWA produced a daily newsletter for NGOs participating in the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Geneva, January 17-21). You can find the Internet version of the Daily News at <http://www.iav.nl/european-womenaction-2000/> under the section "Join the review of the Beijing Platform for Action". EWA also joined the global Women Action network in producing the Daily News during the 44th session of the UN Commission for the Status of Women (New York, March 1-17) - the Internet version can be accessed at

<http://www.womenaction.org/csw44/news.html>. At both conferences, Women Action provided the NGOs with the Internet



cafe services.

To join or contribute to EWA please contact project manager Lin Pugh from IIAV ([pugh@iiaiv.nl](mailto:pugh@iiaiv.nl)) or Lenka Simerska - the Karat Coalition contact person for EWA ([gender@ecn.cz](mailto:gender@ecn.cz)).

European WomenAction 2000 is a project of the IIAV (<http://www.iiaiv.nl/>) - the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement, in co-operation with the Karat Coalition (<http://www.karat.org>) - a network of women's NGOs in Eastern and Central Europe, The European Women's Lobby (<http://www.womenlobby.org>), Les Penelopes (<http://www.mire.net/penelopes>), US Women Connect (<http://www.uswc.org>), FAFIA, CDEACF (<http://www.cdeacf.ca/>) and APC WNSP/UK (<http://www.gn.apc.org/www.apcwomen.org>).

## >>> regional

### Buy Idea about the World Bank?

In October 1999 the KARAT Coalition set up its working group on Women and Economy in order to develop the knowledge and the organizational capacity of women's organizations to address the impacts of economic and social restructuring - as well as of economic globalization - on women and communities in the countries in transition. The focus is on gender and poverty, and on the role of the World Bank. On one hand, the bank introduces economic and social policy models in our region, which contribute to rising income disparities and the growth of poverty. On the other hand, it is a possible conduit for disseminating the notions of public participation, sustainable development, and gender equality to decision makers in CEE countries. The idea is to create three national working groups (in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, with organizations from other countries welcome to join) as well as a regional working group to share and synthesize experiences, knowledge and skills, and to pool resources. The work plan includes: education and skill share meetings, production of tool kit guides (primers), local participatory case study research, monitoring of the gender impact of a selected social or economic sector reform, production of national and regional research reports, organization of stakeholder round-table discussions on gender and poverty, and public debates on the topic. The women's organizations intend to communicate with national and international economic decision-makers by developing regular contacts with selected officials, disseminating our research and policy analysis reports, providing commentaries on their selected documents, and organizing stakeholder round-table meetings. The selected media will be kept informed and invited to the debates. If you are a Karat member organization interested in participating in the project, send in your documentation and budget proposals and additional fundraising efforts will be undertaken.

**Contact:** Ewa Charkiewicz, [echsvb@euronet.nl](mailto:echsvb@euronet.nl), c/o Tools for Transition, Atjehstraat 20, NL 2585 VK Den Haag, tel/fax + 31 70 35230 289, or [ewa.charkiewicz@optimus.was.pl](mailto:ewa.charkiewicz@optimus.was.pl) tel. and fax + 48 22 6227429

## >>> regional

### Women-leaders of Nine Nations Sign Platform for Economic and Political Empowerment

by Sanja Cosic

The buzz of a hundred and more women's voices had been spreading around in the big lobby in front of the conference room in the Pical hotel. They were the voices of the participants gathered in Porec - a beautiful, small town on the Adriatic Riviera in Croatia - for the STAR\* conference: "Advocacy Strategies for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment" which began on June 29 and went on for four days. The majority of the participants were from the countries of former Yugoslavia. The growing problems of women in that region were in the focus of the plenary sessions and the small groups work. There were also participants from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, the USA... All of them did their best to make the conference successful and to reach the title goal. The conference proved once again that gathering and networking among people and organizations is an essential mode of women's activism. And that meetings like this are to be used "to speak up, to stand up and to give a clear idea of what is to be done." (Final words of the American ambassador on women's issues in the UN, Linda Tarr-Whelan). The intensive four-day work resulted in outlining the problems, exchanging experiences and promoting ideas of how to develop strategies of economic, social and political gain for women, making use of the fact that women's experience in the different countries of the region were comparable and identical in many cases. The platform stressed the importance of social education for women; they should be trained for public functions and business initiatives, for changing and maintaining the law. It also underlined the need for continual analysis of the situation of women, and providing them with access to professional qualifications, to information, that will further promote the equality of the genders.

\*STAR: Strategies, Training, Advocacy and Resources for Women's Social Change Leadership in South-East Europe.

## What Volunteers Can Do

The women's public association FEMINA is a non-profit-making, non-governmental association of women volunteers. Started in November 1990, it is now one of the most active regional women's groups with a sizeable bank of intellectual, technical and creative skills. FEMINA's major activities are research, education and information. FEMINA was registered on May 25, 1994 under the Public Associations Act as a local organization operating in Naberezhnye Chelny, Tatarstan. FEMINA's volunteers have conducted more than 10 sociological studies of the situation of women, organized six regional conferences, published about 20 scientific and educational articles, the textbook Gender Aspects in the Sphere of Business Life and Employment and the collection Forming Gender Culture in Student Youth. A course in Gender Studies was established for students of the Institute of Management.

**Contacts:** Elena Mashkova, Director, e-mail: [Elena@femina.kazan.su](mailto:Elena@femina.kazan.su)



## >>> romania

### Time to Vote

As 2000 is an election year for Romania, women's NGOs planned into their agendas a wealth of projects and activities designed to help women both participate in the election campaign and to express their vote in the best possible way - for themselves, their communities and their country.

The Equal Opportunities for Women Foundation (SEF-Iasi) is the national focal point for the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, Working Table Democracy and Human Rights, Action Group for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men - Romania. In August SEF, in cooperation with the Directorate for Equal Opportunities from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, launched a project called Women voters can do it.

Some of the most important objectives of the project are:

- > to lobby political parties to include women's issues in their programmes and women candidates on their election lists;
- > to encourage women to stand as candidates and support them during the campaign;
- > to inform the public about the advantages of giving their vote to women as well as on the benefits society could get from having women in decision-making positions.

For further details, please contact Mrs. Dina Loghin:  
sef@mail.dntis.ro

## >>> romania

The Association for Women's Advancement in Romania (IKON - Timisoara) has launched a project called *It's Time to Vote*.

IKON is running the project in rural areas with two main objectives:

- > to encourage women and girls in rural areas to vote;
- > to educate and inform women in rural areas on the role of the members of the parliament, the role of the state institutions and the relationship between citizens and parliament etc.

For further details, please contact Ms Marga Fripp:  
office@ikon.dnttm.ro

## >>> romania

### Gender and the Mass Media

ARIADNA - the Association of Women Journalists - organized the final seminar of GeMeRo (Gender-Media-Romania) in Bucharest, in July, at the press Center of the Radio House. GeMeRo (1998-2000) consisted of a series of training sessions and workshops on topics concerning women's rights, gender issues in mass media, change of legislation regarding violence against women in Romania, media - communication - and women's image in society. Two hundred women journalists from Romania and Moldova attended the workshops held in the Netherlands (Amsterdam) and Romania (Brasov, Constanta, Bucuresti, Cluj-Napoca, Iasi, Timisoara), organized in partnership with the International Training Centre for Women in Amsterdam and financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the Matra Programme for Democracy.

For further details, please contact Ms. Georgeta Adam:  
adam@fx.ro

## >>> bulgaria

### The Profile of the Bulgarian Woman-Entrepreneur

The results of a survey conducted at the end of 1999 by the "Foundation for Entrepreneurship Development" among 340 Bulgarian women-entrepreneurs shows that they are still three times fewer than men in the private sector. Most women entrepreneurs are between 31 and 50. The average age of women starting their own business is 37. The Bulgaria's women entrepreneurs are well educated. Forty-seven per cent have university diplomas, while 39 per cent have some post-secondary professional qualification. The desire to achieve economic independence and to improve their professionalism is among the basic that motivating factors for these women.

Women entrepreneurs in Bulgaria face greater hindrances than men. Most are oppressed by social stereotypes confining women to the role of wives and child-raisers. Consequently, women are less self-confident than men about starting up their own business. Eighty per cent of women entrepreneurs are married and half of those have two children, which is more than the average for the country. In 70 per cent of the cases husbands help with the housework. The price women entrepreneurs pay for their initiative is lack of time for themselves (67%); little time for friends (51%); little time for their children (48%) and for their husbands (38%). Despite these challenges half the women say that their business has a favorable impact on their personal lives. They mention: higher income, no bosses, and job satisfaction.

Bulgarian women entrepreneurs do not regard gender as an important factor for the successful management of an enterprise. According to them a success depends more on personal qualities than on gender.

Companies run by women are not very different from those run by men. Over 60% of them are located in big towns with population of more than 100,000. Most of them are trade companies (48%), followed by production companies (13%), business service and real estate companies (9%), construction, transport, communications and hotel-business companies. Most companies run by women have fewer than 10 employees (small business enterprises). The obstacles do not differ greatly from those encountered by men - bureaucracy, high taxes, and lack of turnover funds. Every respondent underlines the need for mechanisms that will improve their opportunities for getting credit from banks. Their needs in professional training and consulting are also similar to men's.

In conclusion, women entrepreneurs in Bulgaria do not see their business-related problems as gender-specific. They value the opportunities for self-realization that private undertakings provide and if they had to do it all again, they would.



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## 4. TRAINING

■ W.A.D. offers leadership and gender training in nine different areas.  
Tel./fax: 359 2 9805532; 9805920  
Wad@infotel.bg

■ Gender and Development Training Centre (Haarlem, The Netherlands) is organizing training of Trainers(TOT) in gender and development (English, French, Portuguese)  
E-mail: < gen.dtc@inter.nl.net>  
Tel: 00 31 23 5342149.  
Fax: 00 31 23 5312481/5513260  
Http://www.gender-training.nl/

## 5. TRANSLATION

■ Written and simultaneous translation from English into Bulgarian and Bulgarian into English.  
Anelia Vassileva  
Tel./fax: 359 2 9805532; 9805920  
e-mail: nelly\_vas@yahoo.com

## 6. EXCHANGES

## 7. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

■ Business manager for Fair Play mag. Excellent English, writing, and analytical skills.  
In Sofia; email: wad@infotel.bg

## 8. VOLUNTEERS WANTED

■ Internship/volunteer wanted for the Women's Alliance for Development office in Sofia.  
Interesting work on different projects including Fair play magazine.  
wad@infotel.bg

## 9. MISCELLANEOUS

■ NEW BOOK OUT ON GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S STRATEGIES:  
Sangeetha Purushothaman/Monika Jaeckel (editors):  
"Challenging Development - A Grassroots Women's North-South Dialogue"  
Books for Change, 2000, Bangalore, India, ISBN No:8187380497  
Available from : Sandy Schilen, GROOTS, 249 Manhattan Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11211, USA.  
E-mail:ssncnw2@aol.com

■ THE FIRST GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S NETWORK IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE:

SHINE (Self Help Initiatives Network Europe) wants to link grassroots women's initiatives in the region. A first meeting was held in Prague in January. The minutes of this meeting are available.

Information and Contact:

Rut Kolinska, Siroka 15, 110 00 Prague 1, Czech Republic  
Tel: 00420 2 2316407,  
e-mail: krut@volny.cz

## 10. REGIONAL CRAFT FOR SALE

## 11. WEB MASTER SERVICES

■ Visit OSKa's website (National Women's Information Center in Poland)  
<http://www.oska.org.pl>, Information about OSKa's activities, library, archives, the internet version of OSKa's Bulletin and Calendarium of Events.  
OSKa - Ośrodek Informacji Środowisk Kobietych  
ul. Falata 2 m. 48, 02-534 Warszawa  
tel. (0-22) 849 79 43, tel./fax (022) 849 51 79  
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**VISIT the KARAT Coalition website!**

<http://www.karat.org>



For information about the activities of the KARAT Coalition and its members, the Beijing+5 process, links to women's organizations and many other resources relating to women's issues in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.



# Articles and Art contributions are WELCOME

If you would like to participate in the voice of the **Fair Play** magazine, please send your articles, art, or information to us. **Fair Play** is published **four times a year**.

The mission of Fair Play quarterly is to provide a forum for women in the CEE/CIS countries to exchange ideas and best practices to improve social, economic, political, and legal conditions for women, their children, their families and their countries. Its mission is also to be a voice that carries and interprets grass-roots women's concerns to national and international policy and decision-makers.

## What kind of material are we looking for?

- Interesting, readable, personal articles with compelling headlines and sub-headings which
- dramatize and describe the plight of women living under certain conditions and show how conditions, cultures, laws, and financial situations can affect negatively women's life and the life of her family.
- dramatize and describe how women have overcome certain negative conditions by working individually, in groups, with decision-makers, through NGOs, and benefiting from support from funders, or from changes in laws or policies.
- Present analytical views of a given topic - analyses of situations, tendencies, trends, policies, and possible solutions to concerns that affect women, their families, and their countries.

Submissions should express the views and analyses of the author on situations, tendencies, and trends. The use of statistical data is encouraged to strengthen and add credibility to the position/analyses. Statistics are most beneficial when placed outside the article - in a sidebar, box, or table - separate from the article. We will not accept materials giving only statistical data, which can be found in source books or on the Internet. Also, to ensure that Fair Play is perceived as a professional magazine, please be sure to cite sources for all statistics and materials quoted. Materials giving the regional view are highly appreciated.

- Good examples/solved problems/practices.
- Articles written by young people - especially university students - on how they see their future.
- Up-to-date information about events, conference conclusions, workshops, etc. in your country

## Please follow these format guidelines:

- The submission should be no more than 2,000 words;
- Written in English;
- The author should submit a few sentences about her/himself;

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- The author should supply a photo of herself;
- Form: interview, art., essay.

We strongly encourage writers to check the main objectives of the magazine, to ensure that their submission is suitable. Please contact us if you are not sure.

**Articles will be edited and Fair Play will retain the copyright.**

**Artistic submissions should be either slides or photos. Color is preferred to black and white. Materials will be returned after the issue is published. The artist should also include a short biography and a photo of her/himself.**

Themes of future issues:

- GOVERNANCE (main topic of the next issue): good governance; citizen participation; women in politics; equal participation in decision making; transparency; corruption. Materials must be submitted no later than November 20, 2000!
- HEALTH: women's health; reproductive rights; domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases
- DIVERSITY: minorities; social, ethnic, religious, sexual identity
- VIOLENCE: domestic violence, sexual harassment; trafficking in women, armed conflicts, violation of women's human rights

**You may also submit materials on other topics if you think there is a considerable interest in them.**

**Send all submissions:**

**by e-mail: [wad@infotel.bg](mailto:wad@infotel.bg) or**

**by post: Women's Alliance for Development  
52, Neofit Rilski Street  
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## Benefits of Contributing to Fair Play

### When you contribute to Fair Play you :

- feel the power of being able to contribute to the advancement of women in CEE/CIS countries,
- make sure your country's activities are presented to funders and other supporters abroad,
- ensure your country's activities are elaborated and clarified in a prestigious document suitable for reading by your Members of Parliament and others in a position to make changes in your country
- will receive two free copies of the magazine in which your contribution has appeared
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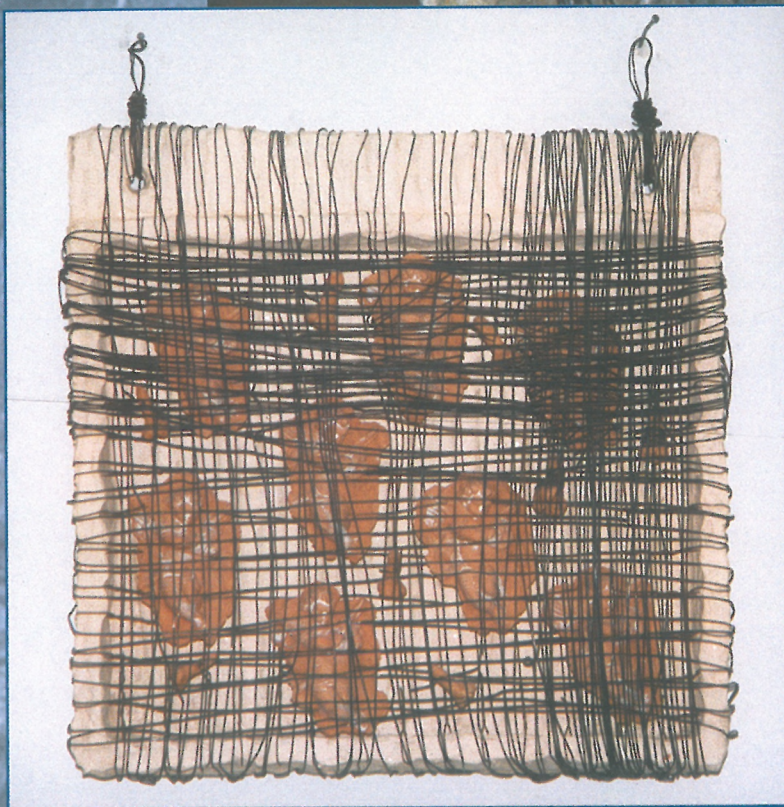
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## Monika Petrova

**Popova** graduated from the Ceramic School in Sofia and the National Academy of Arts. Since 1992 she has had eight individual exhibitions and has participated in six group exhibitions both in Bulgaria and overseas. She holds the Young Artist 1998 award from the International Art Academy in Paris. She is currently teaching three credit courses at the New Bulgarian University in Sofia.





**Albena Mihaylova**  
Ohadchen@geobiz.net

Albena Mihaylova graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia in 1994 with a Master of Arts in Fresco and Painting. She has been a member of the Union of Bulgarian Artists since 1996. She has had nine individual exhibitions: 6 in Bulgaria, 2 in London and 1 in Munich, and has participated in over 20 group exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad. She holds two first awards for Fresco in Bulgaria.

*"Albena Mihaylova is one of the leading young Bulgarian artists. Her works are a tender provocation for the viewer. Every exhibition presents a different concept but follows at the same time her special line, the abstract composition. Using traditional painting method- oil on canvas - she breaks the usual perception by choosing additional media such as graphite, golden or silver folio, with a strong and active combination of colors. The paintings of Albena Mihaylova possess a strange mystery, which is hard to assimilate but enchants all who view. This is not „talent“. It is something more. It is the wish to experiment all the time, the desire to go deeper inside the artist's self and into the art. Gaze at her works and concentrate on the composition of colors, and let the perception bewitch you. Then you will find out."*

Alexander Kuiumdjiev

