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## KARAT Annual Report 2007

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### I. Introduction

Karat Coalition for Gender Equality is the regional network of women's NGOs working together since 1997 to improve the situation of women in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States. Karat was established in response to the need for regional cooperation expressed by women's NGOs from CEE/CIS during the Beijing Conference. During the first years of its activity Karat Coalition focused on the projects related to UN Beijing processes at international and national level (Beijing conference, Beijing + 5, Beijing + 10). The capacity gained at that time encouraged Karat to apply for project related to CEDAW and its Optional Protocol.

Karat responded also to the EU enlargement process, which has been influencing the situation of women in the CEE and CIS by enhancing the scope of its activities and undertaking projects which included:

- monitoring the impact of EU accession on the situation of women in the region, including those living in candidate countries before 2004,
- building capacity of Karat NGOs to lobby and advocate for EU gender equality standards as well as for including the gender component in the EU development and neighborhood policy, also by strengthening cooperation with EU networks and organizations.

### KARAT's statutory mission, objectives and structure:

According to the statute of the Karat Coalition the mission, objectives and activities through which they are pursued are the following:

### The mission:

KARAT is a regional coalition of organizations and individuals that works to ensure gender equality in the CEE/CIS countries, monitors the implementation of international agreements and lobbies for the needs and concerns of women in the region at all levels of decision-making fora.

### The objectives:

- promote gender-responsive policy, decision-making and alignment of national policy and legislation in all countries in the Region with international standards and agreements.
- contribute to the stability and peace in the Region.
- strengthen Karat's capacity to deliver its mission.

### These objectives are being reached through:

- Monitoring the implementation of international standards and agreements at national level (e.g. PFA, Outcome documents of Beijing+5, CEDAW, others).
- Lobbying policy and decision-makers and/or organise campaigns on aligning national policy with EU accession criteria on gender issues.
- Strengthening capacity and share resources (thematic, human, financial, information, best practices, lessons learned) in different specialised areas of expertise in support of engendering policy and decision-making and legislation.
- Facilitating the participation of women leaders from the Region in global and inter-regional networks and events, building on existing leadership programs at all levels.
- Using Karat electronic and printed media as a tool in support of reaching its objectives.
- Building strategic partnerships with networks and NGOs at ECE and EU level.
- Supporting solidarity and collaboration across national, ethnic, religious and other boundaries.
- Enlarging Karat membership towards larger representation, credibility, etc.
- Developing strong lobbying mechanisms.
- Strengthening Karat's internal expertise.
- Strengthening solidarity among Karat members.

### Structure

Karat Coalition is a registered regional network governed by an International Board with its secretariat based in Warsaw, Poland. Being an organization registered in Poland Karat acts in compliance with Polish law. That is being supervised by Karat Registered Board, the body different from the International Board.

Karat carries out its activities on the basis of voluntary work of its members. At present Karat has 49 member organizations coming from 23 countries from CEE/CIS region. Karat's main bodies are: the General Assembly, the International Board, Executive Director, the Advisory Body and the Registered Board. The International Board which is the decision making body between the General Assemblies is elected for two-year-term with one-year alternation. According to the statute this Board meets twice a year but in case the face-to-face meetings of the governing bodies cannot take place, decisions are being made by electronic and other means of communications. The same rule applies to voting during the General Assembly election of the Board members. The rules for the electronic General Assembly are being defined by the Board.

The detailed information on Karat's governing bodies is included in Karat's statute which is available on our website: [www.karat.org](http://www.karat.org).

## **II. Karat's programme**

The activities that Karat undertook during 2007 can be labeled as:

- Capacity building
- Networking
- Advocacy and awareness raising.

Most projects implemented by Karat Coalition embrace activities belonging to different groups mentioned above. Therefore some projects may be referred to in different parts of the report.

## **1. Capacity building**

In 2007 Karat's capacity building activities covered the following areas:

- 1) European Union External Policy
- 2) Working conditions of women
- 3) Karat's institutional development

### **1.1. European Union External Policy**

One of the priorities of Karat Coalition is to increase the capacity of women's NGOs from CEE/CIS to influence the EU decision-makers and mobilize the support of general public for including the gender perspective into the EU external policies and strategies addressed to non-EU countries from CEE/CIS region. The reason for that is the growing concern of Karat about the growing gap between the living and working conditions of women in EU new member states and those that live in the CEE/CIS region outside of the EU. In addition women in non-EU states often lack knowledge about EU external policies, gender equality standards and the relevant documents and thus are not able to advocate and lobby for gender justice approach to those policies.

#### 1.1.1 Building Capacity of NGOs from Eastern European Neighboring Countries related to monitoring gender equality standards in the process of European Integration

The project, implemented within the East-East Programme of OSI, was launched in 2006 and continued in 2007. The project was coordinated by Karat Secretariat. There were four Karat members from CIS region involved in it: Women's Independent Democratic Movement (Belarus), Centre for Women and Development (Georgia), Gender Centre (Moldova), Women's Prospect (Ukraine).

The project aimed at:

- increasing capacity and knowledge among women's NGOs from Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia on:
  - European Union gender equality standards included in: directives, European Employment and Lisbon Strategies, European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument [ENPI] for 2007-2013,
  - civil society monitoring of these standards (example: National Action Plans related to ENPI in respective countries),
  - advocacy at national and EU level.
- strengthening the cooperation among women's NGOs related to European Integration, in order to enable future joint advocacy strategies.

The project addressed the need for strengthening cooperation between CEE and CIS countries which has been expressed by CIS Karat members, who together with CEE Karat members, are concerned about undermining of regional solidarity and cooperation between women's NGOs from the region caused by joining the EU by 8 CEE countries and see the need for preventing polarization between women living in 'developed' (i.e. EU members) and those living in the remaining parts of CEE/CIS.

The project activities implemented in 2007 included:

#### 1) Capacity Building Seminar, 2-3 February 2007, Warsaw.

The Seminar was attended by 20 representatives of NGOs and academics from Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The participants were carefully selected in the recruitment process conducted by the country coordinators and based on the questionnaires developed in cooperation with all project partners. The seminar involved two days of presentations, exercises, analysis and discussions aimed at:

- improving participants' knowledge of ENP, ENPI and EU and opening the floor for exchange of information and experience on the ENP implementation process in participants' countries;

- improving participants' capacity in advocacy and lobbying at national and international level (in particular at EU level).
- planning the follow-up activities at national, regional and international levels.

Since all participants expressed their interest in continuing the cooperation on ENP/ENPI, the e-group has been established through which the contact is being maintained.

## 2) Participation of project partners in the Seminar in Brussels, February 2007

Thanks to the support of KARAT's Partner – WOMNET, the Country Coordinators in the project attended the seminar: *"Can the EU act as a responsible social and environmental player in its neighbourhood?" The Implementation of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instruments*. It was organized in Brussels by a group of NGOs which KARAT cooperates with: Aprovev, Eurostep, WWF, WOMNET and EEPA.

The seminar attended by the representatives of NGOs working on gender and environmental issues in EU Neighbouring Countries (including East and South) aimed at improving capacity and knowledge on ENP and ENPI, advocacy and lobbying for greater inclusion of gender and environmental issues in ENP and ENPI as well as strengthening civil society participation in this process.

This four day meeting included:

- capacity building workshop,
- conference on *Policy Dialogue Forum with Representatives of the EU on Priorities and Programming: Gender Equity, Social and Sustainable Development and Civil Society Participation*. - Among the panelists there were representatives of European Commission, European Parliament, and UN. The panelists were describing the current stage of advancement of ENP implementation as well as ENPI programming.
- individual meetings with the European Commission officers responsible for different countries and different issues
- participants' strategic meetings on planning the follow up activities

The Seminar in Brussels very well complemented the Seminar in Warsaw. Due to the Warsaw meeting KARAT participants were well prepared to Brussels event and could further develop their knowledge by gaining new information (often inaccessible in their countries) as well as to learn about the EU Institutions' perspective of the problem. They also used this opportunity to advocate for the improvement of the ENP and ENPI implementation in their countries as well as for gaining new contact and involving more actively in international cooperation on these issues.

The detail report on this Seminar is available on the website of Eurostep:

<http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/dmdocuments/ENPI%20seminar%20summary%20report%20final.pdf>

## 1.2. Working conditions of women

### 1.2.1. Connecting people North and South. Raising awareness about the development issues in the production of next-generation consumer electronics (mobile phones, MP3 players, and laptops)

2007 was the first year of the implementation of this three year project supported by European Commission. The project is conducted by the consortium of European NGOs led by SOMO. Karat is a partner in the project.

Although it aims at raising awareness among young consumers in the EU about the development issues in the production of the next-generation electronics, it includes the working conditions related components. During 2007 Karat conducted a gender sensitive research on the working conditions in the electronic industry in Poland and completed the relevant report. Other project activities performed within the project in 2007 belong more to the program of 'awareness raising' and are described in the section 3 of this report.

- the capacity building workshop addressed to young activists, ecological and consumers organizations as well as journalists and was focused on raising awareness of the environmental, social, human rights and labour rights issues in the whole cycle of production;
- translating to Polish and distributing press releases presenting the position of the project partnership;
- translating to Polish and publishing two raising awareness consumer guides addressed to young people.

Karat is also responsible for implementing the project activities in Hungary and Czech Republic. In 2007 Karat identified project partners in these countries and supervised the translation of the consumer guides to Czech and Hungarian. In 2007 there were three meetings related to the project in which representatives of Karat took part:

- Project strategic meeting, Amsterdam
- Progress assessment meeting related to elaboration of research reports on working conditions elaborated within the project, Amsterdam
- *CEE workshop on organising women in global electronics supply chains*, Budapest, 11 September 2007. One of the main goals of the meeting was to share information on the working conditions of women in the electronic sector in Eastern Europe and the challenges faced by workers and unions. The workshop was organized by International Metalworkers Federation.

#### 1.2.2. Mobilizing for a sectoral program of work for social quality management in the sporting goods industry

Since 2007 Karat is involved in the three year project focused on the working conditions in production of sport goods with strong emphasis on gender aspects. The project is supported by the EU Commission. The project partnership include the following organizations: Sudwind Agentur (Austria) – lead organization, Inkota (Germany) and Karat. The project is strongly associated with important sporting events taking place in 2008: Euro 2008 in Austria and Switzerland as well as the Olympics in Beijing. The main objective of the project is to raise public awareness of working conditions in production of sports goods and to increase the public involvement in actions aimed at improving the situation. However it includes the strong research component. In 2007 Karat conducted the research and investigation in garment factories in Poland that were followed by the publication of the report on the sportswear sector in Poland. The investigation and research were proceeded by three days of training for researchers and investigators who were: 1) monitoring the working conditions in the garment industry; 2) interviewing the producers, representatives of trade unions and other stakeholders; 3) interviewing the sporting goods consumers.

Other activities implemented by Karat in 2007 within this project were focused on awareness raising and included:

- developing and distributing information and campaigning materials in Polish,
- forming and developing a network of activists (including: Education workshop for activists in Warsaw, participation of 10 activists in the International Activists Seminar, etc)
- 2 issues of project newsletter
- Project websites: in Polish: [www.kobietypraca.org/fairplay](http://www.kobietypraca.org/fairplay) and in English: [www.womenslabour.org/fairplay](http://www.womenslabour.org/fairplay)

#### 1.2.3. Case Study - working conditions of women in supermarket chain in Poland

In 2007 Karat prepared the case study for WIDE that described the situation of the former employee of the supermarket chain “Biedronka” in Poland, the chain owned by Portuguese corporation Jeronimo Martins. The employee, who worked in the supermarket as a manager, took her employer to court for not paying the overtime and won. This win was the first and has been perceived as a turning point for people fighting for their workers rights in Poland. The case study described the situation of workers, mainly women, employed in her supermarket and the ways workers have been exploited by the supermarket owners. The case study includes the analyses of the social reasons for which Polish people have accepted the exploitation of workers and presents the situation after the case was won.

### **1.3. Karat’s institutional development**

Due to the support and institutional grants provided to Karat by the Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Global Fund for Women Karat was able to develop and implement in 2007 an effective fund raising strategy which resulted in gaining funds for projects addressing the main concerns expressed by Karat.

The projects which will be launched in 2008 will focus on the following issues:

- Advocating for strengthening gender components in the European neighborhood and development policies and strategies addressed to Eastern European countries and CIS in cooperation with women’s NGOs in the target countries of these policies; supported by OXFAM Novib.
- Building network with women’s NGOs in CIS on Optional Protocol to CEDAW, supported by European Commission; .

The significant increase in the number of Karat projects resulted in the need for developing Karat's secretariat. At the end of 2007 the recruitment process for hiring additional staff members was launched. Also the decision of moving to the bigger office was made.

#### Participation in TRIALOG training on applying for grants to European Commission

In 2007 Karat's concept note on raising awareness of gender dimension of development issues submitted to European Commission was accepted and Karat staff and project partners were invited to participate in a training provided by TRIALOG. The training aimed at building capacity on writing project proposals to European Commission.

## **2. NETWORKING**

The networking activities implemented in 2007 included:

- 1) maintaining the communication tools
- 2) partnership with NGOs/networks
- 3) participation in important meetings and initiatives
- 4) statutory meetings and networks management
- 5) others

### **2.1. Communication tools**

#### 2.1.1. Karat News:

In 2007 Karat produced and disseminated 9 issues of Karat News, an electronic publication that covers the area of women's and gender issues relevant to the region of Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of the Independent States. The publication has been developed every 1-2 months. It provides information on Karat activities, EU news, important information at regional and national level and includes section on new publications and calls for proposals. Apart from English version 6 Russian and 4 Polish editions were issued. The target group of Karat News are women and women's NGOs in the region of CEE and CIS but the list of other subscribers include also individuals, organisations, academics, decision makers, journalists, and gender experts from EU, US and Australia interested in gender issues in CEE/CIS and co-operation with the region.

#### 2.1.2. Karat website:

Apart from the regular website [www.karat.org](http://www.karat.org), in 2007 two additional websites (English and Polish version) have been up-dated on regular basis. The English website [www.womenslabour.org](http://www.womenslabour.org) provides information about the economic position of women from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It includes statistics, graphs, analysis, international regulations related to the labour market, as well as case studies, information on important events and related links. A particular emphasis is placed on the link between the European Union enlargement process and the position of CEE women in the labour market. The website was produced due to the support of the Global Fund for Women. The website in Polish [www.kobietypraca.org](http://www.kobietypraca.org) focuses exclusively on the situation of women in the labour market in Poland. It provides Polish NGOs and individuals with information on international, regional and national labour law and employment policies which are relevant to the Polish labour market. The website was produced by the secretariat to ensure that Karat's work is utilized as much as possible.

### **2.2. Partnership with other NGO and networks**

One of the main Karat strategic goals is building partnership and strengthening the cooperation with other European networks, organizations and initiatives. Karat aims to bridge the women's networks and organizations from old EU member states with organizations from new member states and non EU countries in Europe.

#### 2.2.1. KARAT and Women in Development Europe (WIDE)

In 2007 Karat became officially the WIDE regional platform. In March Karat's representative participated in WIDE's Steering Group meeting in Brussels. WIDE Annual Conference that took place in Madrid in June 2007 was attended by 15 Karat members from CEE countries and CIS.

### 2.2.2. Karat and European Feminist Forum

In 2007 Karat was actively involved in the joint initiative of feminist networks and organizations to organize European Feminist Forum (EFF) which is planned for June 2008 in Warsaw. The forum is aimed at creating a space for discussions on how to re-politicize the feminist movement in Europe and exploring the feminist agendas needed in today's Europe. Karat as a member of the Steering Committee participated in the meeting in Warsaw (January) and in monthly on-line meetings. Karat also tendered for a EFF logistic co-organizer and was chosen as such.

## **2.3. Participation in important meetings and initiatives**

### 2.3.1. Participation in CONCORD's Working Group on Enlargement, Pre-Accession & Neighbourhood (EPAN):

- Meeting in Brussels, Belgium, May 15-16 (supported by CONCORD)
- Meeting in Sinaia, Romania, November 12-13 (supported by Trialog).

Joanna Szabuńko from Karat secretariat participated in both events as a representative of WIDE in EPAN. The group used to focus on countries in enlargement process but since 2007 its scope is widened and presently also includes developing countries that fall under the remit of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), as well as those covered by Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The meetings in Brussels and Sinaia that took place in 2007 were the first meetings of the reformed group. During these meetings aims, mandate and plan of work of EPAN was discussed and developed. KARAT Coalition's involvement in this group is crucial as its mandate covers many of the countries where KARAT is active. The issue of ENP and IPA are also areas of work of KARAT Secretariat as well as a number of KARAT member organizations. WIDE's, hence KARAT's involvement in the group, is aimed at giving gender perspective to the discussions and activities of CONCORD.

### 2.3.2. Participation in International Campaign Forum (ICF 2007), Bangkok, 26 – 29 November 2007 (supported by CCC)

The Forum was co-organized by Clean Clothes Campaign, Center for Education and Communication and Thai Labour Campaign. The forum brought together over a hundred different people representing unions, women's organisations, campaigners and activists from all over the world for three days of plotting and planning for two major global campaigns co-organized by Clean Clothes Campaign. One related to giant supermarkets selling garments and is still being developed. The other one was PlayFair2008 campaign of which KARAT is an official supporter. It was particularly interesting for KARAT to participate in planning of this campaign as a large part of its activities are also activities of the project: 'fair Play in sporting goods production' in which KARAT is a partner.

### 2.3.3. Participation of Karat's representative in the World Social Forum in Nairobi, January (supported by FEMNET)

The representative of Karat participated in the World Social Forum in Nairobi that took place in January 2007. The participation in the event was preceded by building links with international feminist movement and participating in preparatory meetings in 2006.

### 2.3.4. Participation in 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress "Reconciling The Dichotomies of Development: Ways Forward" organized by SID, Hague, July 4-7 2007 (supported by SID)

Participation of 4 Karat's representative from Georgia, Macedonia, Poland and Ukraine in 50th Anniversary International Congress "Reconciling The Dichotomies of Development: Ways Forward" organized by the Society for International Development. Karat representatives were invited by WIDE, a member of SID. The conference, attended by over 300 delegates, was held precisely at the half way mark of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with their ambitious goal to halve poverty by 2015, and offered an important opportunity to look more carefully at how to reconcile the dichotomies of development. It brought together the international development community to discuss how to ensure the ways forward so that human development, poverty eradication, justice and gender equality lead the international agenda, in a world where too often fear about security and terror dominate.

### 2.3.5. Participation in the Congress of International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Moscow, 28 May - 1 June 2007

The IFJ Congress in Moscow was attended by around 1500 participants (journalists, representatives of journalists association, activists, etc) from 120 countries. Nadezhda Azhgikhina – Karat's Board member – was one of the

organizers of this Congress and secured visibility not only of gender issues in CEE/CIS but also visibility of Karat by promoting its publications.

#### 2.3.6. Participation in consultation process re: UN Gender Equality Architecture

Karat's staff participated in NGO regional consultation on reforming the UN Gender Equality Architecture: "What does it mean for women's rights in Europe and CIS". The one day consultation was organized by Gender Policy Network and supported by UNIFEM in Bratislava (February 2007).

#### 2.3.7. Participation in the strategy meeting on aid effectiveness agenda, Madrid, June 2007

Karat's staff participated in a feminist strategy meeting on aid effectiveness: What's a stake for women's rights and gender equality. The meeting was organized by AWID, DAWN and WIDE.

### **2.43. Statutory meetings and network management**

#### 2.4.1 KARAT Board Meetings

In 2007 two meetings of Karat Board and the election to the Board of Karat took place.

The first Board meeting was organized on 20-21 April in Warsaw. One of its objectives was to create a forum for discussing the issues related to the coalition management and Karat's partnership with NGOs in the EU neighboring countries. The other was to develop concepts of the future projects that Karat should aim to implement. During the meeting the potential forms of cooperation with Karat Advisory Body were also discussed. The second Board meeting took place on 26-27 October. During the meeting the current Karat's project as well as the plan for 2008-2012 were discussed. One of the additional issues the Board focused on was the strategy for cooperation with other NGOs and networks (WIDE, WOMNET, ECCJ). Also the decisions were made about Karat's involvement in European Feminist Forum and about the participation of Karat member organizations in this event. The second part of the Board meeting focused on the Board election planned for the end of 2007.

#### 2.4.2 Board Elections

At the end of 2007 KARAT Secretariat completed the process of Election to Karat Board, which was conducted via e-mail. 55,1% Karat members with voting rights took part in the election (27 organisations out of 49). As a result three new Board members have been elected: Valentina Bodrug-Lungu from Moldova, Lyudmila Petina from Belarus, and Raluca Manaila from Romania.

### **2.5. Others**

Karat service for member organizations. In March a study tour conducted within the PHARE project implemented by AUR – Karat's Romanian member organization "Facilitate the access of Romanian NGOs to efficient methods for fighting against the gender stereotypes by participating within the regional Karat Coalition" was held. The study tour was organized in Warsaw by Karat secretariat to respond to the needs of member organizations. The visit involved a number of informal workshops focusing on past and present activities of Karat, discussions with invited guests such as other gender focused NGOs, Trade Unions and organizations dealing with labour rights of employers of the supermarkets; as well as site visits to other organizations. The study tour was a great success largely due to involvement and commitment of the participants: partners and employees of AUR. This project included also a conference organized in Bucharest by AUR (April 2007) during which the Economic Literacy Training was conducted by Karat Secretariat staff. Also as part of the project AUR translated into Romanian Karat publication "Economic literacy resources kit for CEE/CIS. Gender and economy. How not to be afraid of economic lobbying and advocacy".

### **3. AWARENESS RAISING, ADVOCACY**

Awareness raising is an important part of Karat's projects. It is being carried out at different levels in order to influence public opinion and/or different institutions. In the "capacity building" section (p. 1) three projects with strong advocacy components were described in details. The first *Building Capacity of NGOs from Eastern European Neighboring Countries related to monitoring gender equality standards in the process of European Integration* is a good example of advocacy at EU level. Two other projects related to working conditions of women



in electronic industry and in the sporting goods industry in Poland include activities that aim at raising public awareness at national level. These activities include:

- Establishing and developing network of activists (education workshops for activists, e-groups)
- Developing/translating and distributing information and raising awareness materials (e.g. project newsletter, raising awareness consumers' guides, press releases)
- Project websites

#### Project on gender mainstreaming in the labour market institutions

In 2007 Karat was involved as a partner in one-year project funded by European Structural Funds and led by German firm SPI Consult. The project was implemented in Poland and included 19 two-day trainings for the staff of labour market institutions and NGOs dealing with labour market issues, conferences and publication.

#### Gender mainstreaming training for UNDP – Macedonia

In May 2007 Karat Secretariat conducted a two-day training on gender mainstreaming for the staff of the UNDP office in Macedonia. The training was provided by Karat secretariat and external experts. Karat was chosen to provide the training on the bases of tender disseminated by the UNDP.