

Project Title: EU Gender Watch

Implementing Organisation: Network of East-West Women (NEWW)

Project Manager: Malgorzata Tarasiewicz

Total Budget: 93 350 euros

Total Request from Fund: 45 000 euros

Project Scenario

The last 15 years have been a time of economic struggle for the region of CEE/CIS. The transition from a planned economy and authoritarian regimes to democracy and market economy significantly influenced the region. Lack of transparency in the actions of the governments, corruption and, in severe cases, military conflicts resulted in extreme poverty for a large number of people. Gender equality was influenced by the bad economic situation, human rights abuses due to military conflicts and/or rising fundamentalism. In CEE/CIS violence against women, abuse of their reproductive rights, discrimination in the labour market and low participation of women in decision-making positions have become a serious issue in the recent years.

On the one hand there is a clear distinction between women NGOs in NMS and in the rest of the CEE/CIS region because of a better economic and more stable political situation in the first group of countries. On the other hand all of the countries in the region share a common history and the legacy of communist rule and a socially painful transition to market economy. Hence, it is important that in the process of EU enlargement the two groups of countries (NMS and the rest of the region) do not become alienated from each other. The Network of East-West Women (NEWW) for years has been playing a role of coordinating the efforts to use the commonalities and common experiences of both groups of countries for a common benefit.

NEWW for more than a decade has been a source of information as well as a co-ordinator for lobbying and advocacy campaigns. Due to the profile of its NGO-members both in the NMS and the rest of the region made up of gender experts or renowned gender-based NGOs, NEWW has been well positioned to play this specific role.

This particular experience makes NEWW capable of serving as an advocacy bridge between the region and the EU development policies.

NEWW's concern recently has been centered around a growing divide between the NMS and the rest of the countries of the region. The Network aims at bringing the gender concerns felt in the CEE/CIS region to the attention of the national and European policy makers and become a hub for organising monitoring, lobbying and advocacy efforts to ensure that EU commitments to advance gender equality and its translation into policy, action, and allocation of resources are reflected in EU development assistance to countries of the region. NEWW is concerned with the fact that the EU is weakening in its commitments to gender equality. There is a trend to merge gender equality with non-discrimination, equal opportunities, or human rights themes, which is a worrying trend in terms of its implications on creating gender equality. NEWW's project aims at responding to the need for engagement in advocacy efforts that will ensure that EU development assistance to countries of the CEE and CIS Regions are included in EU commitments to gender equality. This need was recently identified by gender equality advocates in CEE/CIS who have raised concern over the gap between the European Union's commitment to advance gender equality and its translation into practice in the region. Several studies

have highlighted these concerns, including, a report commissioned by UNIFEM and published by Eurostep, Social Watch and Karat entitled "*To the Farthest Frontiers: Women's Empowerment in an Expanding Europe*".

Hence, the Network recognizes a strong need for an EU development policy monitoring and advocacy project which would enable NGOs from the region to engage more effectively with the EU Development Policy Debate and in consequence improve the situation of women in CEE/CIS.

Presently, civil society within the CEE/CIS region is alienated from the EU Institutions and EU Policy because of lack of resources to build their capacity to monitor the EU development policy the starting point of NEWW's project will consist of a capacity building initiative for the participants of the project. In this way they will be able to enter into the second phase of the project, which includes monitoring, lobbying and advocacy activities concerning impact of the EU development policies on gender issues in CEE/CIS. NEWW aims at establishing an EU Gender Watch Secretariat to coordinate the efforts of the project including its two initial phases: capacity building and research on national level in countries outside the EU to explore how gender concerns are impacted by the EU Development Policy.

The Secretariat will then identify common or specific problems of the countries under study and communicate them to the EU and the national governments. It will be done through strategies mainly focusing on the Council of the European Union, in particular on the governments of the countries where the NGO(s) is/are based, and on Members of European Parliament. This will initiate a monitoring, lobbying and advocacy phase of the project that will ensure gender issues are taken into consideration in development and implementation of the EU Policies.

The project will answer the need to build capacity among Women's Rights Organisations to put them in touch with current debates on EU Development Policy and the Financial Perspective 2007 – 2013, and to facilitate research, monitoring and later on lobbying and advocacy actions and campaigns to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in development policies of the EU. At the same time there is a need to demystify the EU and its policies for women NGOs and the general public in the region.

Another important strategy will be learning from NGOs that are working on development issues in the the Global South related to the EU Development Policy . The EU Gender Watch Secretariat will build connections and relationships with organisations such as Social Watch to serve as a model and engage with EU member states NGOs such as WIDE, EUROSTEP, EEPA. (NEWW has already been seeking contacts with Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Concern from Ireland and 2015 Watch.) Thus addressing the need to forge alliances with European-wide networks to strengthen advocacy efforts.

In the CEE/CIS region itself there is a need to strengthen existing networks and create new ones where lacking. NEWW will collaborate with all existing regional networks like ASTRA (a network on reproductive rights), KARAT (a lobbying network) or La Strada.

Project Potential

The projects potential will last beyond the one-year implementation period as a consequence of activities like monitoring, lobbying and advocacy, which have long-term impact while requiring a prolonged preparatory phase. This preparatory phase including activities such as capacity-building of the project participants, research, establishment of the EU Gender Secretariat and setting-up of CEE/CIS Development Network (with its Focal Points) will be implemented through grant of aid received from the Presidency Fund. NEWW will seek the support of UNIFEM and its other partners for the next phase of project implementation including monitoring, lobbying and advocacy activities.

Since the Network of East West Women has a well-established record of lobbying/advocacy projects in the past and has many reliable members and partners it will be able to continue this work and also to fundraise in order to support the project further.