



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
DEFENCE POLICY SECTOR
Institute for Strategic Research

GENDER EQUALITY

IN DEFENCE SYSTEM

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TRENDS

THEMATIC COLLECTION OF ARTICLES

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Belgrade 2016

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EUROPEAN CORNERSTONES OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS – CASE STUDY OF SERBIA

“Women are in double jeopardy. Discriminated against as women, they are also as likely as men, if not more so, to become victims of human rights violations...”

Today, what unites women internationally - transcending class, race, culture, religion, nationality and ethnic origin - is their vulnerability to the denial and violation of their fundamental human rights, and their dedicated efforts to claim those rights.”

(Amnesty International, *Human Rights are Women's Rights*)

Abstract: *The paper analyzes European cornerstones of women's human rights and provides insight in the state of women's human rights in Serbia in light of European principles. Women's human rights are an integral part of universal human rights. However, women are de facto and de jure very often subjected to unequal treatment, wherefore there is a constant need to improve gender equality. In addition to the usual approach to universal human rights, inherent to every human being, the definition of “women's human rights” includes also the enforcement of specific affirmative actions aimed at achieving real equality for women. There are several areas of concern requiring immediate action and improving gender equality in order to obtain equal human rights opportunities for women. The European Union (EU) requires of candidate countries to fully embrace the fundamental principle of equality between women and men. Furthermore, monitoring the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation in this area remains a priority of the enlargement process. Accession to the EU is one of the main priorities of Serbia, like of many other Balkan countries. Consequently, Serbia is to transpose European principles on gender equality and to achieve gender mainstreaming in the national system. At the same time, Serbia, as an OSCE participating State, has recognized equality between men and women as a fundamental aspect of a just, secure and democratic society. A case study of Serbia in the field of protection of women's human rights indicates that Serbia, as an OSCE participating State, has recognized gender equality as part of*

the universal human rights both in its Constitution and its relevant law. Serbia's legal framework on women's human rights is largely harmonized with the relevant European cornerstones. The importance of the European cornerstones lies in the fact that they represent important guidelines for transition countries, like Serbia, which are modernizing their societies and national legal frameworks, together with their public policy measures in the area of protecting women's human rights.

Keywords: *women's human rights, European Union, Charter of Fundamental Rights, Serbia.*

Introduction

Women's human rights are an integral part of universal human rights. However, women are de facto and de jure very often subjected to unequal treatment, wherefore there is a constant need to improve gender equality. Women defend their human rights by every small act defying patriarchy or inequality, whether by asking to go to school or refusing to marry the man their father chooses. Therefore, in addition to the usual approach to universal human rights, inherent to every human being, the definition of "women's human rights" includes also the enforcement of specific affirmative actions aimed at achieving real equality for women. The need to make a specific connection between human rights and women's rights is ironic considering that half of humanity is female. Gender inequality is the most pressing contemporary human rights issue, including disparities in education, employment, healthcare, power and decision-making, violence, and poverty that impact billions of women and girls from every part of the world throughout their lifetime (Hawkins, 2012).

The United Nations defines discrimination against women as "... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (UN, 2009).

The issue of gender equality had been neglected for a long time in Europe, as well as at the global level. The family was perceived as the fundamental unit in society, and little attention was paid to the power relations and inequalities within this unit. Responsible fatherhood and the sharing of household tasks

and child care are relatively recent concepts, which touch the gender division of labor (Wittberger, 2012).

Like other transition countries, Serbia is characterized, inter alia, by high social costs of economic and political reforms that affect women and men unequally. *Exempli causa*, women constitute the majority of the unemployed (about 55% of unemployed, more in Babović, 2008) and their political participation in decision making structures is not yet equal to that of men, especially at the high decision making levels. Reproductive healthcare standards have dropped and gender-based violence is on the rise. Negative traditional stereotypes put emphasis on women as the family pillars, burdening them with unpaid house chores, and putting them in an inferior position vis-à-vis men.

Accession to the EU is one of the main priorities of Serbia, like of many other Balkan countries. Consequently, Serbia is to transpose European principles on gender equality and to achieve gender mainstreaming in the national system. At the same time, Serbia, as an OSCE participating State, has recognized equality between men and women as a fundamental aspect of a just, secure and democratic society.

Issues Relevant to Women's Human Rights

The following areas of concern require immediate action and gender equality improvement in order to obtain equal human rights opportunities for women:

- 1) Women in decision-making – quota system and affirmative action; equal representation in political parties, national parliaments, governments; proper implementation of legislation in the private sector;
- 2) Work life – informal labor, unemployment, unpaid care work, gender pay gap, child care;
- 3) The fight against gender stereotypes – media and the education system; general awareness raising through public campaigns; combating hate speech against women - misogyny;
- 4) The health system – provision of health services, financing and privatization, reproductive health, needs of specific target groups;
- 5) Violence against women – zero tolerance, proper implementation of relevant laws; training and shelters; media campaigns;

- 6) Trafficking in women and girls – measures addressing the underlying causes; ensuring women's economic independence and women's rights.

Women can participate in political and economic stabilization and the creation of democracy only if they are provided with equal chances and equal opportunities. Human rights and women's human rights are critical prerequisites for the modernization of societies in transition countries.

Consequently, European principles, contained in EU law and OSCE standards (OSCE, 2014) constitute guidelines for improving women's human rights in practice. It is, therefore, one of the priority issues the EU has been monitoring during its accession talks with Serbia and other candidate countries. The latter need to achieve tangible results in the realization of comprehensive women's human rights before they accede to the EU.

EU Cornerstones of Women's Human Rights

Equality between women and men is a key principle of the European Union (EU), which is based on the rule of law. This principle is embodied in Article 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Although proclaimed in the form of a political commitment at the EU level in 2000, the Charter became legally binding (*ius cogens*) with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (Gasmi G 2., 2013) on December 1st, 2009. The EU Charter contains the so-called minimum parameters of universal human rights that are common to all EU Member States and, among them, also references to women's human rights.

Long before the EU Charter, the original 1958 Rome Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) contained in Article 119 a provision on equal pay for men and women. The Amsterdam Treaty on the EU (1999) introduced the standard of the equal treatment between women and men (Tisheva, 2012) that was replicated in the actual Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). The Amsterdam Treaty on the EU also introduced the concept of gender mainstreaming that is backed by the legislation and through positive action in favor of women ("the underrepresented sex").

This concept means the incorporation of gender and women's interests in all policy-making, i.e. not only national or regional authorities' actions, but supra-national (EU) and international decision-making (Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, etc.) as well. The new Treaty on the EU (the Lisbon Treaty) comprises the following relevant provisions:: Article 8, which provides for the mission of the

EU to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women; Article 19 that empowers the EU to take adequate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation; Article 153 that enables the EU to adopt directives in the areas of equality between men and women *inter alia* in relation to labor market opportunities and treatment in work and working conditions; Article 157 that provides for the principle of equal pay and entitles the EU to adopt measures for ensuring the application of the principle of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, including the principle of equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value.

European cornerstones of women's human rights include also strategic documents, such as the EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010 - 2015¹ that spells out actions in five priority areas and one area addressing cross-cutting issues. The proposed actions follow the dual approach of gender mainstreaming, i.e. integration of gender equality goals into all policy areas, and implementation of specific measures. Defining equal economic independence as a "prerequisite for women and men to exercise control over their lives and make genuine choices," Priority Area I focuses on measures towards increasing women's employment, including those that enable the reconciliation of work and private life, and the removal of barriers to employment and social security. Priority Area II includes actions towards ensuring equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value, addressing structural issues such as sex-segregated labor markets and women's educational attainment and professional development. Priority Area III aims at equality in decision-making. Dignity, integrity and the end to gender-based violence are addressed in Priority Area IV, which envisages the establishment of a comprehensive and effective policy framework and measures, including criminal law. Priority Area V is concerned with how the EU will further gender equality in all activities undertaken in third countries. The document envisages active cooperation with a range of international organizations and makes specific reference to conflict, post-conflict, and humanitarian aid interventions.

The EU requires of candidate countries to fully embrace the fundamental principle of equality between women and men. Furthermore, monitoring the transposition, implementation and enforcement of EU legislation in this area remains a priority of the enlargement process. The current situation shows that

1 http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/em0037_en.htm.

those countries have made clear progress in harmonizing national legislation and policy, but that their implementation and enforcement of gender equality laws and policies are lagging. This diagnosis is valid also for Serbia. Three Horizontal Issues apply to all Priority Areas. The section on gender roles explicitly addresses boys and men and their essential involvement in promoting non-discriminatory gender roles in all areas of life. The section on legislation focuses on the need to establish an effective legal framework, which corresponds to societal change. The final section establishes gender equality as an outright governance issue, to be pursued jointly by a broad range of state and non-state actors. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2010) has therefore been established to significantly strengthen knowledge and tools for engaging in gender equality work at the EU level.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development – EU Plan of Action 2010 – 2015² sets out nine specific objectives on how to ensure that development cooperation among European Member States and with third countries furthers gender equality goals, such as: gender mainstreaming in all development projects, use of sex-disaggregated data, application of gender performance indicators, inclusion of gender equality issues in interventions on economic policy, health, education and women's political empowerment and measures to combat gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

The European Gender Equality Pact (2011 – 2020)³ forms a close link between the EU Strategy for equality between women and men 2010 – 2015 and the EU Strategy for growth, Europe 2020. The Pact, notably, launches the implementation of the gender mainstreaming concept in the labor market, improved access to childcare and the fight against all forms of violence against women. The Pact, however, does not lay down any specific binding measures. Its main focus is on increasing women's employment, wherefore gender equality is seen through the lens of economic growth and competitiveness.

European (EU) secondary legislation on women's human rights consists of thirteen directives on equal opportunities for men and women (two of which have been amended). European directives regulate women's access to employment, the equal pay principle, the protection of motherhood, parental leave, occupa-

2 http://www.dev-practitioners.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/EU_GEAP.pdf.

3 http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?rubrique61&lang=en&debut_actu=10#pagination.actu.

tional social security schemes, prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination, remedies in case of discrimination and the issue of self-employment. EU Member States are obliged to harmonize their national regulations on those issues with the standards contained in the directives. This obligation extends also to the EU candidate countries, including Serbia. EU directives have confirmed their value as the most optimal and the most flexible legal instrument for intraregional unification of national legislation in Europe not only for the Member States, but for the candidate countries as well.

The legal profile of the EU directives indicates that they are part of the Union's secondary legislation created by the EU institutions, primarily by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, where the EU Commission is the initiator of the community's secondary legislation, including directives, regulations and decisions (Gasmi G. 1., 2010). The legal basis of the jurisdiction conferred to those EU institutions is contained in the constitutional treaties of the Union, concluded by the Member States, whereby they have conferred a significant part of their national jurisdiction to those institutions (Gasmi G. 1., 2010). Consequently, national sovereignty has not been lost in the EU, but only redistributed (national governments share it with EU institutions).

EC Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women (EC, 1975) is the first equal treatment directive focusing on equal pay for equal work and elaborating the implementation of erstwhile Article 119 of the Rome Treaty on EEC. EC Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions (EC, 1976) followed in 1976. Those two directives and Article 157 of the Lisbon Treaty on the EU (TFEU) are the most important *acquis*, i.e. European derivative legal cornerstones in the field of women's human rights. The other eight directives, with their subsequent amendments, focus on health and security, burden of proof, occupational and mandatory social security schemes, parental leave, self-employment, etc.

In addition to this secondary law with binding effect (*ius cogens*), the EU institutions (the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament) also adopt recommendations, resolutions and opinions. They also constitute secondary EU law, but lack mandatory legal effectiveness and judicial protection, and are advisory and consultative in character. Their legal value lies in the specific political relevance and in the representation of various interests reflected in their provisions.

Relevant International Cornerstones of Women's Human Rights

International human rights and gender equality standards remain the reference frameworks governing operations of all political institutions and actors in the OSCE region. All OSCE participating States have committed themselves to respecting these standards.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) enshrines “equal rights of men and women”, including the right to participate in government. Under Article 2 of the UDHR, adopted by the United Nations (UN): “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”⁴.

The Declaration paved the way for further international commitments in the area of women's rights, most comprehensively in the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)⁵. The Convention has been ratified by 189 countries.

Expanding upon this “bill of rights” for women, as CEDAW is often called; the 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action mandated that Member States “take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.”⁶ Building on commitments made during the United Nations Decade for Women⁷, the Beijing Declaration reflects a new international commitment to the goals of equality, development and peace for all women.

Similarly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration⁸, adopted in 2000, contains a statement of values and principles, as well as eight specific goals – known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – with related targets, which constitute an international agenda for the twenty-first century. In it, UN Mem-

4 <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

5 CEDAW, Article 7, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>.

6 The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing, China – September 1995. Action for Equality, Development and Peace. Platform for Action. United Nations (UN). Platform strategic objective G1, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>

7 <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/women>

8 Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, 55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration, A/55/L.2, <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

ber States agreed to “promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.” Fulfilment of Goal 3 – to promote gender equality and empower women – is widely recognized as essential to achieving the other seven Millennium Development Goals.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security⁹, also passed in 2000, reaffirmed the importance of women’s participation in the security sector and in peace processes, emphasizing the importance of their “equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.”

OSCE participating States have repeatedly pledged to end gender-based discrimination and strengthen gender equality in political and public life (OSCE, 2003). The 1990 Copenhagen Document, for example, contains non-discrimination provisions that can be particularly relevant to the protection of women’s rights - paragraph 5.9 commits participating States to “prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground” (OSCE, 1990).

The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality directly links equal rights of women and men to “peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and, therefore, to security and stability in the OSCE region.” (OSCE, 2004). The OSCE Gender Action Plan remains the most comprehensive OSCE framework to date guiding OSCE institutions and participating States in advancing towards true and meaningful gender equality.

The OSCE Gender Action Plan’s emphasis on ensuring the equal participation of women and men in political and public life, including political parties, was elaborated at the December 2009 OSCE Athens Ministerial Council, at which the Council adopted Decision No. 7/09 on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life¹⁰. This Decision calls on all participating States to: “[E]ncourage all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making.” (OSCE, 2009).

As this comprehensive range of international obligations, standards and instruments shows, OSCE participating States are committed to promoting gender

9 Resolution 1325 (2000), UN Security Council, 31 October 2000, http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf

10 <http://www.osce.org/mc/40710?download=true>.

equality and women's political participation, including in decision-making positions. Women make up more than 50 percent of the voting public. Party leaders should take the time to reconsider what role women play within their party ideology, and where their parties stand on gender equality.

Serbia, as an OSCE participating State, has recognized equality between men and women, especially in political and public life, as a *conditio sine qua non* for a democratic society.

Case Study of Serbia – Women's Human Rights in the Light of European Principles

Equality between men and women means securing the equal rights and opportunities of women and men in laws and policies, as well as ensuring equal access to resources and services within families, communities and society (OSCE, 2014). This includes equal rights to participate in all spheres and at all levels of political and public life.

Serbia, as an OSCE participating State, has recognized gender equality as part of the universal human rights, first and foremost in its constitutional provisions. Under Article 15 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2006)¹¹, Serbia shall guarantee equality of women and men and develop a policy of equal opportunities. Prohibition of discrimination (a gender neutral definition) is enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. Sexual orientation is not explicitly listed as grounds on which discrimination is prohibited. Related to the issues of trafficking in women and girls, forced labor is prohibited by Article 26, paragraph 3, under which forced labor is prohibited and sexual or financial exploitation of a person in an unfavorable position shall be deemed forced labor. Articles 62, 63 and 66 of the Constitution enshrine equality of spouses; freedom to procreate; and special protection of families, mothers, single parents and children.

Under Serbia's Criminal Code¹², a breach of equality is liable to punishment (Article 128). The Code also prohibits domestic violence (Article 194), but does not specifically define gender based violence directed against women just because they are women. In 2003, an amendment to the Criminal Code was passed

11 <http://www.ustavni.sud.rs/page/view/en-GB/235-100028/constitution>

12 <http://www.legislationonline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes/country/5>.

concerning sexual harassment and human trafficking. Domestic violence is also prohibited under Articles 10 and 197 of the Family Law¹³, which was amended in 2005 and now includes protective measures for victims of domestic violence.

The Gender Equality Law¹⁴ entered into force in 2009. Serbia was, however, the last country in the Balkans region to adopt such a law. The Gender Equality Law provides the basic, systemic legal framework for regulating and improving women's human rights in the following domains: 1. Employment, social and health protection system; 2. Family relations; 3. Education, culture and sports; 4. Politics and public life; and 5. Judiciary. The implementation of the Gender Equality Law has contributed significantly to Serbia's harmonization with European principles in those areas. Nevertheless, due to the obvious need for further alignment with the European principles, a new Gender Equality Law was drafted in Serbia (mid-2015); it includes a chapter on combating gender based violence that is in line with the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2014). The Istanbul Convention entered into force on August 1st, 2014 (Gasmi G 3, 2014).

The Anti-Discrimination Law¹⁵, adopted in 2009, prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex, gender and sexual orientation and qualifies it as a severe form of discrimination (Articles 13 and 20). It also prohibits discrimination at work, and provides a definition as to whether or not affirmative action is to be considered discrimination. The Law also established a new mechanism for protection, a Trustee (Commissioner) for the Protection of Equality, appointed to a five-year term in office and authorized to receive complaints from everyone claiming to have been discriminated against.

The Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment¹⁶ is the first law of the Republic of Serbia that introduced affirmative action for vulnerable categories, especially women. Serbia has been party to the UN CEDAW (UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979) since 2001 (which it acceded to while it was part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

13 <http://legislationonline.org/documents/action/popup/id/16015>

14 <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/action/popup/id/16015>

15 <http://www.minoritycentre.org/library/law-prohibition-discrimination-republic-serbia>

16 <http://www.zso.gov.rs/doc/Law%20on%20Employment%20and%20Unemployment%20Ins.pdf>

The National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality, along with its Action Plan for the 2010 – 2015 period¹⁷, was adopted in 2009 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No 15/09) with UNDP's technical assistance. It represented the first step towards improving the realization of women's human rights. The Strategy focuses on six overall goals and ten specific objectives. The main purpose of the Strategy is to provide opportunities ensuring the creation of systemic, institutional and development solutions for the achievement of an equal opportunities policy in various aspects of the life of women. The Action Plan sets out the specific activities to be undertaken in the 2010 – 2015 period. The Action Plan Table can be summarized as follows:

1. Increase participation of women in decision-making processes,
2. Improve the economic status of women,
3. Achieve gender equality in education,
4. Improve women's health and advance gender equality in the healthcare policy,
5. Prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and put in place a comprehensive system of protection for women victims of violence,
6. Eliminate gender stereotypes in the media.

In each of above-mentioned areas, the Action Plan defines the roles and responsibilities of the implementing partners, as well as institutional mechanisms that are to enable the attainment of the planned outcomes and the achievement of the overall strategic goals on the basis of qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation indicators. The new Strategy on improving the status of women for the forthcoming period was being drafted by the Government of Serbia at the time this paper was written.

Concluding remarks

States are sometimes unable to meet the demands of their residents in term of security, justice, prosperity or human rights. Poverty and social divisions still exist despite the states' efforts to manage national economies and resources to

17 http://www.gendernet.rs/files/dokumenta/Engleski/Serbian/Plan_of_Action_for_the_implementation_of_the_National_strategy.pdf

the benefit of all their citizens. This fact has encouraged states to develop intensive international cooperation on matters of mutual interest. Women's human rights are such an issue of common interest, but of universal importance as well. EU directives deal mostly with the economic empowerment of women, while international legal principles insist on greater inclusion of women in political decision-making processes. Consequently, there is a certain synergy between those European cornerstones that is an important guideline for transition countries, such as Serbia, which are modernizing their societies and national legal frameworks, together with their public policy measures in the area of protecting women's human rights.

There is also a certain *differentia specifica* between the functioning of the EU based on supra-nationalism, on the one hand, and that of the OSCE, on the other, which is based on consensus and the principle of sovereign equality of the participating States. However, the result of implementing those European cornerstones of women's human rights is the same for each country, as well as for Serbia, i.e. those cornerstones represent the road to a secure, fair and democratic society based on social justice.

Serbia's legal framework on women's human rights is largely harmonized with the relevant European cornerstones, except for the comprehensive concept of gender mainstreaming (UNDP, 2007). However, fair regulation of women's human rights *de jure* does not automatically guarantee gender equality. i.e., the *de facto* equal status of women. Therefore, these norms have to be implemented consistently, if they are to be efficient. At the same time, it is highly incumbent to change the negative traditional stereotypes on gender roles in society that have been hindering the realization of women's human rights. Raising public awareness on anti-discrimination legislation and practice should thus be pursued as an integral part of the national public policy.

Finally, the following issues need to be considered when assessing the issue of the proper implementation of the legal framework on women's human rights in Serbia – bearing in mind that it is a policy impact assessment (Staronova Katarina et al, 2007) process, carried out *post festum*:

- A) The general context and aims of public policy on women's human rights, taking into account international rules and standards in this field;
- B) Identification of the ex-ante social impact of legislation on women's human rights, with special emphasis on economic empowerment and education of women, eradication of gender based violence and increasing women's participation in political and public life;

- C) Establishment of the process of consultations among key stakeholders and decision makers, on the basis of a structured dialogue;
- D) Regular reports on the implementation of the Gender Equality Law to the National Assembly, prepared by the Government;
- E) Public awareness campaigns on the significance of improving women's human rights;
- F) Development of partnerships in the implementation of the relevant regulations at all levels, through round tables on the social, economic and cultural impacts of the Gender Equality Law, with full participation of NGOs and government agencies.

The effectiveness of the European cornerstones of women human rights hinges on the extent of development of the national institutional capacities of Serbia (and of other transition countries) applying those rules. Namely, the judiciary, the executive and other relevant stakeholders should be vested with significant powers to implement relevant European regulations on women's human rights and to follow the European standards in this field, which are the guidelines of legislative reform in Serbia, preferably in a more advanced and prosperous manner to provide for optimal protection of women's human rights (Buscaglia, Ratliff, 2000) [1]. Moreover, the monitoring mechanism of the relevant authorities is just as important for the effective implementation of the law.

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