



Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EC' Pre-accession Assistance to Macedonia

International Gender Policy Network

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has made commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment outside its borders. As stated in the "2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men", "Gender equality is a goal in itself, a human right and contributes to reducing poverty. The EU is a key player in international development efforts and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Development Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). It has reaffirmed gender equality as one of the five key principles of the development policy in the European Consensus on development."¹ Although the EU's different levels of commitment provide third countries with opportunities to address gender inequalities on their domestic soil, challenges remain to bring these commitments into effect.

Civil society organizations point at the gap between policy and practice: an overview of the European Commission's annual work, legislative programmes and policy strategy documents reveals a limited integration of gender concerns.² Furthermore, the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and mainly women's groups in policy discussion and formulation lacks a clear mechanism, despite the obligation of EU institutions to support a political dialogue with them.³ As an active promoter of gender equality, the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) intends to engage in a dialogue with the Commission's Delegations in the countries of Eastern Europe, South-eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in the matter of the upcoming revision of the country and regional strategy documents (Country Strategy Papers, Regional Strategy Papers, Multi-annual Indicative Planning Documents). The IGPN has taken the opportunity of the midterm-review and the annual review of the country/regional strategy documents to highlight the weaknesses of development cooperation and pre-accession assistance in terms of gender concerns, and to advocate for improvements.

Within the framework of this advocacy activity, the IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries linked with IGPN, and one common Regional Advocacy Card. The aim of this advocacy work is to remind the European and national representatives of their policy commitments. The Advocacy Card for EC pre-accession assistance to Macedonia firstly provides an overview of EU's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Secondly, the strategy document for Macedonia is examined in the context of the EU's commitments to gender equality. Next, an assessment of gender issues in EC's assistance to Macedonia is presented. Finally, recommendations are proposed to the actors involved in various degrees in the preparation of the strategy document: the EU officials, national government and civil society organizations.

1 A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, *European Community*, (COM 2006) 92 final, p. 9, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0092:FIN:EN:PDF>

2 Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 10

3 For more information see Chapter 2 in Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ A commitment to gender equality is reflected in a number of politically and legally binding documents of the EU and EC (Treaty of Amsterdam, Maastricht Treaty, Charter for Fundamental Rights of the EU, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals).
- ❖ The promotion of gender equality outside the EU is outlined as the number 6 priority area of the **2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** (Commissions' Communication). This priority is further detailed as follows: 6.1 Enforcement of EU legislation in acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries and 6.2 Promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), external and development policies. The key actions taken by the Commission will include monitoring and promoting gender mainstreaming and specific measures in the ENP, EU external relations and development policies, at policy dialogue and programming levels (Regional/Country Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers); at implementation level, particular attention will be devoted to gender mainstreaming in the new aid modalities (budget support and sector programmes).
- ❖ In terms of the EU development cooperation policy, the crucial policy framework for promoting gender equality is the European Consensus on Development, agreed upon in 2005 by the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament, and the representatives of the member states, where gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting issue.⁴ Furthermore, the **2007 Commission Communication on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation"** is the first step towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality and empowering women through development cooperation.⁵
- ❖ Related to the 2007 Commission Communication is the document "Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States", also known as the **Council Conclusion**. One of the conclusions is the following: "The Council recognizes the Commission's and the Member States' specific responsibility to support developing country partners in eliminating discrimination and gender inequality by increasing visibility and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and to promote and engage in an enhanced political dialogue at all levels, including the highest political level, which incorporates gender equality explicitly as a central theme."⁶
- ❖ In line with these documents, the EU has supported a **twin-track approach: gender mainstreaming** (mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of development policy) and **specific measures** aimed at socioeconomic and political empowerment of women.

4 "EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality," *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

5 "EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality," *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

6 Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting with the Council on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, *Council of the European Union*, 15 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09561.en07.pdf>

GENDER IN THE STRATEGY DOCUMENT FOR MACEDONIA

Preface to the Strategy Document

The aim of the EU's overall assistance to Macedonia, an EU candidate country, is to support the country's progress towards reaching the Copenhagen accession criteria and to prepare the country for future EU membership. For candidate or potential candidate countries, EC's programmes and financial assistance are formulated in the Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).⁷ The EC's strategic planning document under the IPA is the Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD). Another important document is the Accession Partnership (AP) with an annual report called Progress Report, which monitors and assesses achievements of the country during the year.

The strategic areas of the MIPD 2007–2009 are covered by five components: Transition Assistance and Institution Building, Cross-border Cooperation, Regional Development, Human Resources Development, and Rural Development. Gender equality is considered a horizontal issue in the strategy documents. The MIPD is issued for a three year rolling period and is reviewed on an annual basis. Currently, the MIPD for the period of 2009–2011 is being drafted, and as stated by the EC Delegation in Skopje, open discussions are taking place with different national stakeholders, the civil society and the government.⁸

Analysis of the Document from a Gender Perspective

The MIPD mentions gender equality as a crosscutting issue: "Equal opportunities and non-discrimination will be respected as regarding gender as well as minorities and vulnerable groups at the programming and implementation stage, particularly in relation to socio-economic support programmes." (Annex A, p. 49) Moreover, gender issues are pointed out in relation to employment in component IV- Human Resources Development. Gender indicators in the document demonstrate that in 2004 the employment rate of women in Macedonia was only 28.8 %, and of men about 16 percent higher (44.4%). Among the main priorities in the area of human resources development is "*Tackling the labour market situation of young people, women and long term unemployed*: Pilot projects can be launched to address the difficult employment situation of young people, to raise the employment participation by women and to favour (re)insertion of long term unemployed, in particular via job creation initiatives and preventive measures."

Although gender equality is introduced as a cross-cutting issue in the document, there are many instances when gender equality could be mentioned separately, as an important challenge to be tackled. Other cross-cutting issues such as the environment and good governance receive more attention, being pointed out as key challenges or main areas of intervention. Gender equality is emphasized only in component IV – Human Resources Development, even though it is very relevant to draw attention to gender issues in all of the components. Gender questions could be further specified in reference to, among others, rural development, education, cross-border cooperation, social policy.

7 In January 2007, IPA replaced a series of EU programmes and financial instruments for candidate countries or potential candidate countries, namely PHARE, PHARE CBC, ISPA, SAPARD, CARDS and the financial instrument for Turkey

8 Consultation Process with the Civil Society, *EU Mission to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 28 October 2008, http://www.delmkd.ec.europa.eu/en/information_sources/press_releases_2008/Consultation.htm

DIALOGUE WITH EC DELEGATION⁹

In August 2008, the IGPN made inquiries into the EC Delegation in Macedonia concerning the programming of the IPA allocation for 2009 and the involvement of civil society, particularly women's rights organizations in consulting the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Delegation stresses that gender equality, as other horizontal issues, is taken duly into account for all the 5 components of the IPA. For component 4 (Human Resources Development), the programming period is for 3 years (from 2007 till 2009) and allocations are already done. For component 1 (Institution Building), the programming process is on an annual basis, and will be launched before the end of August 2008. The Delegation added that civil society organisations will be consulted, and invited to an information/consultation meeting, which is foreseen to be organised at the end of January 2009.

Recently, the Delegation released a statement saying that on 28 October 2008, the Delegation of the European Commission and the Directorate General for Enlargement have initiated the official consultation process with Civil Society in the country regarding the Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document (MIPD).¹⁰ The Delegation has invited representatives from national civil society organizations to give input into this strategic document for the period 2009-2011.¹¹

IGPN'S ASSESMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN THE EC'S ASSISTANCE

The EU stresses that gender equality and women's empowerment are high on the agenda of external relations, including pre-accession assistance to Macedonia. However, the IGPN's brief assessment of the gender aspect of the EC's planning, programming and implementation of the pre-accession assistance reveals that gender concerns are in many aspects neglected.

Actual implementation of the scheduled IPA assistance to Macedonia has not started yet. Furthermore, relevant operational structures and systems (the Central Finance and Contracting Unit as Implementing agency) for decentralized management of the IPA are still not operational. The EC's plan is to manage the funds and confer the management on national authorities once they are prepared and all the conditions are met. Currently, some of the activities planned towards achieving the outcomes within the strategic document are implemented within CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation).

In accordance to MIPD, a major share of IPA assistance for the period 2007-2009 will be oriented towards Institutional building and delivered through component 1 (Transition Assistance and Institution Building), where actually the most detailed programming was undertaken.¹² However, the implementation of these funds is anticipated in 2011. The funds were concentrated around two areas of intervention: implementation of the sectoral reforms and implementation of the *aquis*. It is important to point out that identification and selection of the priority areas were made without taking into consideration the suggestions from the civil society.

Further scrutiny of the EC's assistance reveals a lack of gender concerns in the

9 Information in this section has been obtained through email communication of IGPN with the EC Delegation and desk officers in Brussels

10 Consultation Process with the Civil Society, *EU Mission to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 28 October 2008, http://www.delmkd.ec.europa.eu/en/information_sources/press_releases_2008/Consultation.htm

11 Ibid.

12 Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document 2007-2009 for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, *European Commission*, p. 11, http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/mipd_fyrom_2007_2009_en.pdf

projects. Available documents for 2007 and 2008¹³ provide lists of projects, developed through the applied consultation mechanism by the Macedonian government. This mechanism was seriously criticized by the civil society for lacking transparency, and involving only a limited number of CSOs, mainly members of the Civic Platform.¹⁴ No specific projects in regards to gender equality and women's empowerment could be assessed in the documents. Moreover, no specific activity that will ensure gender impact assessment based on specified indicators can be registered in any project fiche.

In addition, it is crucial to point at the lack of expertise within the institutions/administration in gender issues (in many cases almost complete absence). Knowledge and skills for a gender impact analysis in planning, implementation and evaluation should be an obligatory part of the training and consultation process. More to the point, local expertise in the field should be used in order to assist and secure that specific knowledge in the local context will be taken into consideration. Qualitative and quantitative gender data and analysis is not available and therefore not used to serve as a basis for integrating gender aspect and setting gender sensitive indicators in the planning and developing of the projects. These deficiencies influence further monitoring and evaluation of projects' effectiveness, particularly in terms of the impact on women and men.

Programs for 2007 and 2008 expect the participation of the civil society in the decision making and in providing social services. The main portion of the funding goes to technical assistance for building capacities of the Unit for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Society (0.3 million Euros for 2007 and 0.5 million euros for 2008). The grant scheme (to be managed in the future by the Unit) of 0.8 million Euros for approximately 15 contracts are allocated with expected co-financing of 10-15 %. Taking into consideration the lack of resources and capacities of women's NGOs in Macedonia, it is very unlikely that they will have access to these grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To support the development of comprehensive national policies followed by sufficient funding, based on clearly formulated indicators, effective monitoring and evaluation of the approximation and implementation of the policies and projects, in accordance to already set EU policy for gender equality and specifics of the national context
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity (Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points)
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals (to have a budget line for gender-related activities)
- To strengthen and build the capacity of women's NGOs to act as watch dogs for the implementation of gender policy
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries by setting the minimum standards for consultation of the local stakeholders which will be applied during the process of the development of internal policies and the national programming of IPA (6 weeks consultation, targeting NGOs with gender expertise based on established standards etc.)
- To consider appropriate alternatives to the existing implementation of the concept of

13 National Programme for the FYR Macedonia under IPA-Transition Assistance and Institutional Building Component for 2007 and 2008

14 Out of approximately 6000 national CSOs, 29 only are members of the Civic Platform

gender mainstreaming which proves to be ineffective

Recommendations to the National Government:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations and their initiatives aimed at addressing women's issues
- To ensure gender expertise of the national administration

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to significantly strengthen the efforts towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances with other organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their advocacy and lobbying activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegation in Macedonia
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments
- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- To advocate for inclusion of projects that specifically target gender issues, apart from having it as a cross-cutting issue

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