

# Women in the Balkans / Southeastern Europe



■ Gabriella Schubert and Johanna Deimel (eds)



SÜDOSTEUROPA-  
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Gabriella Schubert - 978-3-86688-616-2

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# Südosteuropa-Studien

Band 79

# **Südosteuropa-Studien**

Herausgegeben  
im Auftrag der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft  
von Gernot Eler

**Band 79**



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Gabriella Schubert and Johanna Deimel (eds)

 **BiblionMedia**

Leipzig

2016

The editors express their thanks to



for the financial support

**Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Bibliothek**

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie;

Detaillierte bibliografische Informationen sind im Internet

Über <http://dnb.ddb.be> abrufbar

ISBN: 978-3-86688-615-5

ISBN (eBook): 978-3-86688-616-2

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Geschäftshaus „Grauer Wolf“

Hainstraße 11

04109 Leipzig

[info@biblion.de](mailto:info@biblion.de)

[www.biblion.de](http://www.biblion.de)

in Kooperation mit Kubon & Sagner GmbH

München – Berlin – Leipzig – Washington/D.C.

[www.kubon-sagner.de](http://www.kubon-sagner.de)

Anschrift der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft e.V.

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Photo Cover: Alketa Xhafa-Mripa's art installation in June 2015 in the football stadium in Pristina addressing wartime rape © Photo Valdete Idrizi

Cover: Christopher Triplett, London

Printed and bound by: Difo-Druck, Bamberg

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## Preface

Almost three decades ago, in September 1985, the Berlin Institute for Balkan Studies organised a conference on "The Position of Women in the Balkans". As the preface of the proceedings shows, the core concept of the conference was "patriarchality":

"... in recent years, it has often been argued that women have lost their original dominant position (i.e., matriarchate – G.S.) to men and, to put it mildly, have been subjugated by them. As Europe's oldest and well-studied culture, Southeast Europe is the test case of choice to test the validity of this thesis."

Even at that time, the papers by scholars from a variety of disciplines presented at the conference and published in the proceedings, however, revealed quite different reality, and a rather differentiated picture at that.

Three decades have past and in all likelihood, major developments have added to this complexity. The transition in the former socialist states, military conflicts, Europeanization, migration, social change, financial and economic crises have all had an impact on the position of women in Southeast Europe.

After the Second World War, socialism gave women access, albeit never unquestioned, to public and economic life through education and jobs. Sometimes women in socialist countries reached prominent positions earlier than they did in Western countries. At an early stage, for instance, socialist countries had female ministers, some of them in positions of real political power (Ana Pauker). In the FRG at best statutory women existed in positions of marginal relevance. Some women reportedly controlled their husbands and wielded significant power through them (Elena Ceaușescu, Mirjana Marković). In subsequent decades, urban women increasingly began to follow Western role models and become consumers of international fashion. Occasionally the post-communist transition produced women in a new role as entrepreneurs (e.g. Marijana Matthäus). Top-positions for women, however, remained rare (e.g. Jadranka Kosor). Today, many young women opt for higher education or advanced training in order to improve their living conditions and achieve social mobility. To many of them, the combination of education and looks is the key to success.

In the civil wars of former Yugoslavia women were typically victimized. At the same time, they were the ones who championed peace, for instance in the Belgrade group of the "Women in Black." Their activism instigated other women to become an active proponent of peace, combining women's emancipation and the peace movement and countering the machismo of the nationalists with persistent pacifism. Even today, women's organisations such as the "Regional Women's Lobby for Peace and Justice in Southeast Europe" for justice and reconciliation brings together the former adversaries from the wars. The Ukrainian group "Femen" has become a precedent throughout the region.



Although there has never been a Balkan equivalent to the Western women's emancipation movement, many women have been forced to a more active stance by the private necessities of economic survival and parenting. Largely unnoticed by men who tend to persist in old stereotypes in the Balkans, some of the real heroes of the Balkans today are women. More often than not, in the economic dire straits since 1990 women were the ones who left their homes in order to earn money in the West for their families, typically in low-pay menial jobs. The wife provides the money, the husband tends the children – traditional role models turned upside down.

Having said that, public sexism still is an everyday experience for women in Southeast Europe: in their workplace, in commercials and in politics. In the media of the Balkan countries, "women are blatantly reduced to their body and looks," as Sanja Sarnavka argues. She heads the organisation B.a.B.e. (an acronym for "Be Active, Be Emancipated"), founded almost twenty years ago and one of the main groups in Croatia fighting for women's rights. "Women are being sexualised," the Zagreb-base and EU-funded women's group "Izvor" admonishes. Both groups are actively informing women about their rights, offering legal assistance and a telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence and funding research concerning the discrimination of women.

Famous female pop singers in the region aspire to the role of sex symbol and are the figureheads of the widespread turbo-folk and Čalga culture of the region: suggestive dresses, dolled-up singers and folk music with accordions. The media play their part in this scene. In Bulgaria, for instance, an explicitly sexist TV commercial of was changed after negative comments and a storm of protests.

Women fighting for gender equality often face unexpected resistance on the part of other women. "Too many women despise feminism and think that a "real" woman should not question the traditional values," says Sarnavka, the head of B.a.B.e. Below the surface of modernity, traditional values and gender patterns persists. Surveys demonstrate that due to their self-image many women choose this role of their own accord, the role suggested as the ideal position by the nationalist parties.

The burgeoning growth of prostitution and trafficking in women in the former socialist countries of Southeast Europe marks yet another side of the image of women. The transition to capitalism and consumer society brought a massive expansion of prostitution and the sex industry, which have become sizable economic factors. Thousands of women and girls ended up in the hands of human traffickers and panderers, forced by poverty desperation and lack of education. CARE supports local organisations fighting human trafficking and also advocates equal opportunities in education and jobs for women and ethnic minorities in Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo and Croatia.

The publication is a collection of contributions to a symposium on "*Women in the Balkans / Southeast Europe*" held by the Southeast Europe Association

(Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft) 3 / November 2014 in Munich. The conference team was comprised of Petra Bläss-Rafajlovski (former Vice-President of the German Bundestag; member of the Board of Southeast Europe Association), of Johanna Deimel (Deputy Director of the Southeast Europe Association), and Gabriella Schubert (university professor for Slavic and Southeast European Studies and member of the Board of Southeast Europe Association).

The editors would like to express their sincere thanks to the German Federal Foreign Office for the financial support for the proofreading and to the Southeast Europe Association for the institutional base. Victoria Somogyi helped to handle the layout of the book manuscript.



Family picture – Workshop 3 / 4 November 2014 in Munich

Finally we would like to thank our contributors for their participation, their papers and patience regarding the publication. We hope that with this publication we may shed a light on the situation and the engagement of women in Southeast Europe / the Balkans.

*Gabriella Schubert / Johanna Deimel (July 2016)*



## Introduction

Gabriella Schubert / Johanna Deimel

The fundamental changes after the system change and the collapsed economies have not only implicated disorders in political and social status, but also a backlash in terms of return to patriarchal values as well as to traditional gender relations and hierarchies. A perception of gender roles following traditional patterns and a concept of femininity reducing women to their bodies, open sexism in media, the so called “sex industry” and “women markets” as well as the ban of abortion, increased domestic violence and trafficking in women have been combined with neoliberal values, right ideology, neo-patriarchy and the ruling concept of masculinity. Feminization of poverty, low incomes and unemployment very often force women to decide between career and family. Special problems of women belonging to ethnic minorities need a special focus. On the other hand, women have also used their chance to create their own business, not to forget female subcultures. Women’s participation in decision-making, especially in political parties, and their representation in the public scenery is an important indicator for the degree of their emancipation. Bringing together women engaged on women’s issues in different areas – from the academia, the Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society, and policy makers – is bound to result in a variety of perspectives and views:

*Gabriella Schubert*, Berlin, university professor for Slavic and Southeast European Studies and member of the Board of Southeast Europe Association, provides an overview on the complex situation of women and gender relations in Southeastern Europe. At the beginning, she explains what it means to be a women in Southeast Europe where patriarchal values have traditionally been a dominant factor of social organization and interaction and where patriarchy has not been eradicated neither in communist nor in post-communist times. After a brief insight into pre-modern masculinity and femininity concepts and rules defining the cohabitation in the Balkan extended family, she speaks about the apparent change which occurred during the socialist period. She refers to the fact that while women and men were formally equal and women received access to education and to employment they could not advance further than midlevel positions. The opposition between public and private life, a grown difference between urban and rural women and women’s double burden are also mentioned. During the civil war in former Yugoslavia women were victims as well as peace activists with a consequent pacifism. In her critical assessment Schubert considers women in the post socialist society as mainly the losers of transition.

A strong advocacy for women is provided by *Marije Cornelissen*, former Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur on women’s rights in Balkan EU accession countries at the European Parliament, Amsterdam. In her contribution she

referrers to the report on “Women’s Rights in the Balkans” which was debated in March 2013 and finally adopted by the European Parliament in May 2013. The report, which has been met with a lot of criticism by the respective countries, was based on interviews with 50 organizations and explicitly addresses issues of concern in specific areas by also offering concrete recommendations to the respective countries - as for instance concerning the property law in Albania, the protection of maternity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the implementation of legislation and election law in Croatia, support to victims of violence in Kosovo, the fragmented implementation of action plans in Montenegro and the cooperation with civil society in Serbia. Concentrating mainly on women in the labor market, in the social system and on violence against women, the report provides a powerful tool. Cornelissen emphasizes that EU accession and subsequently the necessary adoption of the *acquis communautaire* have a huge impact on women’s rights because almost all negotiation chapters also entail gender related aspects. Thus, the EU accession process offers important instruments to improve gender equality in particular regarding legislation. She further underlines that it is of specific importance to lobby for an open and transparent EU accession process and draws the attention on the impact of the global economic crisis for women, as well.

She makes references to the 2015 EU-Semester for economic governance and to the indicators of the EU 2020 Strategy and their focus on economic and social issues as well as on employment and education. To her mind economics and national budgets are always gender policy related. The SEE semester on governance thus needs to be properly discussed in parliament as well as in the public. It is, however, worth to mention that the South Eastern Europe 2020 Strategy not only lacks gender related indicators. Furthermore, the Strategy also regards women mainly as a social problem and not as an important economic factor and potential. Therefore the Regional Cooperation Council needs to be pushed to address gender issues along with the social perspective in general more properly.

A significant problem is the lack of data and indicators; and what is more, data available are often distorting the reality. Special problems relate to business registration, informal and subsistence economy and to the fact that statistics of tax offices and ministries are mostly not involved in the so-called gender machinery. Thus, a gender sensitive data basis needs to be set up. The UN Regional Conference on Gender Statistics on October 23, 2014 in Tirana has introduced a plan for a joint regional publication of gender statistics.

### **Parenthood, Economy and Social Welfare**

*Krassimira Daskalova* (who was not able to contribute to the publication, unfortunately) reminded during the conference that it is necessary to carefully observe the theoretical problems. The editors take the liberty to refer to her arguments provided in the discussion in Munich. Daskalova claimed that women and feminist discourses need a precise indication on the exact period in socialist

time. Balkan countries lived under different regimes, which also require specific distinctions of timeframes and countries in the analysis. Further on, a more comparative approach between and within the countries is required. While most Balkans countries were peasant states before, changes followed between the years 1945 – 1989. In the post socialist past the Southeast European countries also differed between the Eastern Bloc and Greece and Turkey with subsequently varying gender contracts in the respective countries. Daskalova reminded that women have not been victims only during communism and socialism. Yet, regarding gender equality, much progress was both ambiguous and contradictory in socialist time, i.e. the de jure and de facto situation were not the same. Given the fact that maternity protection was provided in Bulgaria for 460 days and thus provided for the longest period in socialist countries, one may ask whether that was really to the benefit of women.

*Ana Carević* and *Dragan Sabljic*, both from the GTF-Initiative for Sustainable Growth in Zagreb, underline that women's entrepreneurship in Southeast European countries is an imperative due to its economic potential. The Gender Task Force (GTF) - initiated by women and established in 1999 within the framework of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe – has first concentrated on the political representation of women. This did not lead to a real transformation in gender equality, yet. Since 2010 the GTF's emphasis is laid on women entrepreneurship and on the economic empowerment of women in general. The GTF intends to establish a policy dialogue on women's entrepreneurship between businesswomen, civil society and policy makers. Though female unemployment is high across the region the economic crisis has forced women to work, however mostly in informal economic sectors. While in Croatia and in Turkey the first businesswomen's clusters exist, female entrepreneurship is quite a new phenomenon in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Montenegro and thus still needs to be established and consolidated there.

It is good news that in the meantime more countries of the region are currently preparing or implementing a strategic approach towards women entrepreneurship. Obviously, there is a political will and financial assistances are available. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) promotes services focusing on female entrepreneurship and special programs on Women in Business have been set up in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The use of EBRD regional programs and new credit lines is strongly recommended. The huge potential of women in business and economy must not be neglected anymore. Especially given the fact that "women are well educated, that they have different approaches in doing business and are less corrupted than men, female entrepreneurship offers a long-term and broader added value to the societies. Though women are better social-networkers this did not translate into business so far. Women still have to cope with the lack of social infrastructure and are confronted with inter-generational gaps regarding women's roles in family and

economy. Public discourse on the situation of women is missing generally. Additionally, legislation and gender machinery are still not in place adequately. It is also challenging that women are mostly seen as victims rather than as positive actors in the business environment. However, women are not only a target group, but also a resource of economic development. Finally, a new framework for the gender perspective is required. Steps in that direction are: the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum on Women in Business in June 2014, organized by the Montenegrin Parliament and in 2015 the regional Ministerial Conference on women's entrepreneurship in Southeast Europe.

*Vera Gudac-Dodić*, Senior Research Associate at The Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade, explains that in Serbia increased mass education and employment of women, based among others on the principle of equality, was promoted from the early days of the socialist state. Women gained a number of rights on a formal and legal basis, including the right to schooling and education under equal conditions, the right to work and equal pay for the same work, active and passive suffrage, paid maternity leave, social insurance, the right to divorce, abortion and others. Socialist society adopted a raft of legal and normative acts guaranteeing gender equality. Modernizing processes that took place in Serbia in the post-war period had an impact on the family, the position of women and her life in it. Full legal equality between men and women, extended schooling and increased economic independence, based on the fact that the number of women in work is much higher than before, had major ramifications for her status. The process of family nuclearization, liberalization of divorce and the possibility of birth control were all key determinants of the position of women in socialism. None of this was enough, though, to entirely overcome traditional mindsets in terms of the essence of women's social functions, to rely upon deep-rooted values, or to change the traditional roles of men and women within the family.

The post-socialist transition offered both possibilities and risks to women however in this respect a more comprehensive analysis and comparative research is required. It is of particular interest to look at the developments which are characterized by very dynamic societies and simultaneously by contra dictionary trends and fragmentations of populations. In Albania for example it would be interesting to explore how far rural women who migrated into the cities are really urbanized. A feminist perspective in dealing with statistical data, analytic discourse and oral history is needed. Additionally, the differences concerning women belonging to ethnic minorities have to be taken into account. As indicators of re-traditionalization of the societies, the backlash in women's and social rights, the feminization of social activities, unequal payment and lower salaries, especially in "grey economy", were mentioned. It was also advocated that family planning is a women's choice and has to be treated as a human rights issue.

Big cities provide better chances for employment for women. In particular, business at micro level and in rural areas needs great creativity but is offering job

opportunities for women as well. Thus, one can talk of a new kind of creative entrepreneurship by women. For example, young educated women are mainly working in IT innovation, energy sector and new medicine technology. As examples for new forms of women's networking the Network of Rural Women in Vojvodina and the self-organization of single mothers in Novi Belgrade were mentioned. One severe problem, however, is still the lack of women's ownership of land. Moreover the gap between gender equality strategies, legislation and their implementation persists and has to be closed. Again the impact of laws on the grounds of reality was qualified as very low. Here especially the parliaments and civil society have a crucial role in monitoring their implementation and application in practice.

### **Work-Life Balance, Migration**

*Marijana Dinek*, Executive Director of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Initiative Foundation in Sarajevo, elucidates the situation of female migrants, refugees, internally displaced and asylum seekers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. She reminds that women are under international protection in South Eastern Europe. Up to now there is a lack of research on the effects of migration in transition countries. Bosnia, for example, has to cope with female migrants from Africa, Syria and Iraq today. Generally there is no gender sensitivity in dealing with migrants as well as an ignorance regarding their real needs. People in Bosnia don't know anything about the specific cultural traditions of female migrants from Africa. These migrant women live in Bosnia without any documents, there are no programs for their employment and they are generally victimized, which is a huge problem. There are also highly qualified women among them. Some of them are victims of trafficking. Programs for economic empowerment of migrants are urgently needed. A positive example is the catering service established in Sarajevo for women from Syria, Iraq and African countries. Dinek points out that migrant women have especially to be empowered to create their own life, to fight for their rights and to use their resources. Specific political decisions concerning infrastructure, transport, social care and schools have to be made as well. She further states that public perception of refugees and the role of media should be carefully taken into account.

*Marina Hughson* (Senior Researcher/Scientific Counselor, Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade) has been since long time an advocate of the visibility and of empowerment of women. Already in 1994 she organized the first post-communist conference in Belgrade entitled "What can we do for ourselves", followed by the Women's Balkan conference in 2003 on "Women – agents of change". The question is, "how to make what we want to make", Hughson stresses. Upon request of the EU Commission she made a study on "Gender Country Profile for Bosnia and Herzegovina", published in June 2014 and available at the internet. One of the conclusions of the report was, that despite the fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina has set up successfully legislative and policy



framework for gender equality, stronger efforts are needed to achieve real equality on the ground. As a sociologist her approach is from the social change perspective regarding gender issues. Regarding migration she points to the fact that there is rural-urban migration as well as backwards. Often due to huge poverty in the cities not only those of rural origin (re)migrate to the country side. Gender inequalities should be treated and approached within a complex web of social inequalities and impoverishment. Hughson also takes a look at masculinity. Men are also victims in rural areas: high level of alcoholism among young men; women cannot stand the patriarch hierarchy etc. In the 1980s new colleges have been set up in the country, at which many women attended. The education policy had an impact on female family strategies. Usually three generations of women have been deployed before and female employment was understood as normal and not questioned at all.

We all learned during the debate at the workshop that the young generation in *Albania* lacks both, experience and correct and objective information especially regarding the communist time. The UN Women Country Office in Albania has been conducting four core programs: leadership; political participation, civil society organization measuring; women's economic empowerment; violence against women and regarding national planning and budgeting on a gender perspective. Because of the global economic crisis Albania now is confronted with an increased return of Albanians (more men than women were working abroad) especially from Greece and Italy. Thus, the remittances have decreased, which not only has a severe impact on the country's GDP but on family incomes, too. In addition, the returnees face problems in finding jobs, in housing, schools for kids and in social services.

In *Montenegro* there are villages where all women have left and only men live. As a consequence, there is the critical phenomenon going on, that men from Northern Montenegro marry women from Albania, who often neither know the language nor the groom before and are forced into the marriage. *Bosnian* refugees who return into their homeland and try to start their own enterprise get disappointed and often leave the country again. Especially young people seek their opportunities abroad. This brain drain and the reduction of birth rates have a great impact on the overall development of the country in the future.

*Ana Luleva*, director of the Ethnographic Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia, turns the attention on women and informality, especially in the tourist sector. The inclusion in informal economic activities is part of the system and of family survival strategies, she explains. Gender stereotypes are persisting in Bulgaria. Luleva prefers to use the term gender instead of women, because men are also suppressed by the patriarchal order. In Bulgaria one can generally observe a tendency back to motherhood and family which is in a clear contradiction to the socialist gender contract. This new neo-patriarchal discourse is worrying and women so far did not resist against the respective media discourse. Bulgarian women are only active in the spheres of childcare and motherhood. Due to the lack

of political will for gender equality legislation, the lack of women's organizations and to the generally neoconservative public media discourse women are regarded as objects. Luleva finally observes a masculinization of the Bulgarian language which leads to a total disappearance of female terms and job titles, especially for professions in higher positions.

### **Sexism, Violence, Human Trafficking**

According to *Maja Raičević*, executive director of the Women's Rights Center in Podgorica, Montenegro is one of the most traditional patriarchal countries in the region. Women are responsible for the success of the entire family life. The numbers of divorces are increasing, and divorced women thereafter have a different and much lower social status than men. The list of negative trends include: discrimination of divorced women; widespread domestic violence; cases of selective abortion; different appreciation of the birth of a girl and a boy as well as a low economic empowerment of women. She also reports about media campaigns against strong women; they are targeted by smear campaigns, sexism, intimidation and open attacks. Active women also face threats from family members, relatives and men, often linked to traditional views on women's role in the society. In the media, active women are frequently demonized and their work is discredited. Media freedom in Montenegro is declining. This makes it even more important to strengthen solidarity among women in case of harassment. Good news is that discussions are ongoing about the role of women in the electoral system and that women are fighting for human rights and against corruption. Trafficking of women is a cross-border phenomenon and must also be challenged and addressed within an international and regional context. While Montenegro has signed the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, regular institutions and structures are lacking. Besides the implementation of the Convention, public awareness is needed on the issue of violence against women.

*Inge Bell* (Munich / Leipzig) - publicist and Human Rights Activist and the "European Woman 2007" - draws the attention to the victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is a big business. Commercial sexual exploitation has been one of the fastest growing areas of international organized criminal activity. The EU registered 30,146 victims of human trafficking from 2010 to 2012, according to a European Commission report – most of them from Romania and Bulgaria. Lacking concrete numbers it is estimated that over 1,000 children were trafficked for sexual exploitation. Around 80 percent of the victims were women of which 95 percent were also trafficked for sex. Others, mostly male, were enslaved for labor. Poverty and the accompanying lack of economic opportunities have played a significant role in the proliferation of women trafficking activities, as human trafficking is a symptom of poverty. Bell pays particular attention to the situation in Germany, to the victims, the perpetrators, the methods of human

traffickers and the difficult prosecution. With a very personal engagement for victims of human trafficking and forced prostitutions she sheds the light on Ioana from Romania and on her godchild in Bulgaria.

Concerning human trafficking *Croatia* is more a transit country than a contributor, we have learned during our workshop. Women are politically engaged in promoting an effective implementation of the so called Nordic model to prevent trafficking and exploitation. Over the past ten years, 300 women in Croatia have been killed by their husbands, partners, sons or other family members although the trend is falling. Still, victims of violence have only limited access to help services. Croatia is an example where economic situation is grim and the GDP decline since the last six years alarming. 60,000 children to the age of six years live below poverty lines. Both, the severe economic situation and the conservative position of the Catholic Church are contributing to a re-patriarchalization, i.e. reinforcement of the patriarchal order and promoting patriarchal values. According to one statement the Croatian society of today is utterly divided along ideological lines. On the one side, for instance, not only the Catholic Church but also women were part of a strong movement to promote patriarchal values, as it was the case with the referendum on same-sex -marriage in 2013 only. On the other side, same-sex life partnerships have been acknowledged in Croatia.

### **Reconciliation, Participation, Representation, Lobbying and Regional Cooperation**

*Lejla Turčilo*, Vice Dean at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Sarajevo, and *Seid Masnica*, Professor of Communication and Public Relations at University Dzemal Bijedic in Mostar, draw the attention on women in Bosnia and Herzegovina again. More than 20 years since the Dayton Peace Accord ended the war in 1995 Bosnia and Herzegovina is far from being a stable, consolidated state. The country is deeply divided between entities and ethnic communities; the socio-economic situation is bleak and poverty widespread. The lack of reliable statistical and empirical data is hampering solid analysis regarding the position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina where women face many difficulties and obstacles present in both their private and their public life. Although over the past 10 years the international community has made significant efforts to develop a national legal, institutional, and political framework for the implementation of the principle of gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, unfortunately, there is still no clear strategy and thus gender equality continues to be treated as a women's issue. Both authors reflect on the women's disadvantages and discrimination on the labour market, concluding with the note that the transition processes from socialist to market economy and democracy, the end of the socialistic system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the establishment of different new social and economic relations (privatization and market economy) were not beneficial for women and their position in the economy and the labour market. A similar conclusion can be drawn

from the political representation and empowerment of women, where frameworks and quota are put in place often due to international organisations' insinences. In many cases it looks good on paper when it comes to gender issues, but there is definitely an inequality when it comes to the access and / or positions in the market and / or political life. Turčilo and Masnica analyze the role of media on the attitude towards women and regarding their political presentation. According to a survey out of 8,000 articles there were only 200 about women during the election campaign of 2014 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Bosnian society is left with a widespread trauma: More than 20,000 women were raped or sexually abused during the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict. Women victims of war crimes and especially sexual violence in wartime are in a particularly difficult position in the society and they and their problems are almost invisible in media. The number of cases of sexual violence which have been processed is very low. In general, we may say that women victims of sexual violence are still "numbers," used to support dominant narratives.

A small group of human rights activists led by Serbian campaign group *Women in Black* staged the commemoration in downtown Belgrade in April 2016, carrying placards with the names of the cities and towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina where civilians suffered most in the 1992-95 war. Stasa Zajovic from "Women in Black" said their aim was to "express the deepest solidarity and compassion with the victims of the merciless aggression which came from Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb Army" (See more at: [balkaninsight.com](http://balkaninsight.com)). The "Women in Black initiative" in Belgrade was described by Zorica Trifunović during the symposium in Munich as an example for women's capacity of networking. She reported about 16,000 street protests within the last 25 years despite verbal attacks against them as "bitches" and despite blame games. Sometimes the protests were even heavily guarded. "Only women have the capacity of networking across the region", she said. The contacts between women in the region have never been broken, even not during the war. Since 2011 a regional initiative has been launched for a Women's Court – A Feminist Approach to Justice in the former Yugoslavia, including Slovenia, which is supposed to focus on war crimes during and after the wars in the 1990s. There is so far no official talk about it and the initiative is facing a lot of difficulties, Trifunović informed. Though due to the ongoing political Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue the situation in general has improved in the region, it is still a problem to organize a cross-regional meeting in Bosnia, because of the visa-requirement for Kosovo representatives. Trifunović strongly promoted the importance of regional meetings of women, especially from Kosovo and Serbia. As others, Trifunović observed a re-traditionalization of gender roles in the societies and in the media, an empowered nationalism in all former Yugoslav countries and a severe militarization. While women offer opportunities for peace and reconciliation; their potential is not yet adequately used.

Women's empowerment is also matter of higher standards of ethical behavior and of concerns regarding the common good. Women are less corrupt than men and have a high level of empathy and sensitivity. Women's issues concern the entire society and are also an indicator for the level of democracy. However, up to recently Albania held one of the lowest rankings regarding female representations in elected positions at national level. Since the quota-system has been incorporated into the electoral code, more women have entered into politics and the number of female representatives in parliament has increased. Women entered into high-level decision making positions. In Albania today women's participation in parliament reaches 21%, seven ministers are female and women hold a share of 47% in high level positions in public institutions. These achievements need to be sustained and still a lot needs to be done. Recent years have seen significant strengthening of the laws and policies which promote gender equality, national strategies and laws are in place – but the reality is less promising.

*Teuta Sahatqija* at time of the conference member of the Kosovo Assembly, President of the Women Cross Party Caucus, and Vice President of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Prishtina, reminds us on the time of suppression during the Milošević-regime, the war in Kosovo 1999 and the in many aspects difficult reconciliation between the Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb communities afterwards. Initiatives are trying to reestablish links between countries, ethnicities and the Western Balkan region. She sheds a light on Kosovo, which, according to her, experienced many kinds of transitions: transition from socialist economy to market economy, from a patriarchal to a modern mentality and to an attempt to accept women as equal partners, from a war torn country to the rebuilding of a modern infrastructure, from a one party to a multi-party system and others. Women politicians have been actively taking part in shaping a better future for Kosovo. Again with the help of the international community legal frameworks aiming at gender equality and women empowerment have been introduced. According to Sahatqija the quota in elections is creating the critical mass of women within institutions, which is able to start the process of empowering women and of transforming women MPs to equal partners with men MPs. Yet, the number of women leaders of political parties is still very low and an 'old boys' network' within and among political parties seems to influence most key decisions in Kosovo. The overall political and societal environment in Kosovo is still affected by the war, by post-war experiences and by lacking proper reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs. The Women Cross Party Caucus of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo was established in 2005 - during the visit of former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Kosovo. The Women Cross Party Caucus managed to overcome the differences between women MPs, whether there were political party, ethnicity, religion, language differences. Another initiative, the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe, was founded in 2006 in Zagreb aiming to bring together prominent women from post

Yugoslav countries and Albania with the intention to contribute to peace and security in the troubled region. In February 2016 in Skopje the “Budva Initiative” now renamed to “Follow-Us Initiative” agreed to implement joint activities in the following areas: economic empowerment of women, gender in education, and prevention of gender-based violence, political participation and representation of women at all levels, engendering media and the portrayal of women in media and public life, and promotion of dialogue among youth.

The Women’s Caucuses or Alliances in parliaments play an important role in empowering women in politics and regional reconciliation. Besides the already existing ones in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, a cross-party Women’s Caucus has been established in Serbia recently as well. Currently the Serbian Parliament has 84 women MPs, which is 33.6 % of the Assembly. Generally, more attention has to be paid on women’s representation in local governments and municipalities. Finally: the EU accession and EU membership (perspective) have a strong impact on gender issues concerning legislation, national strategies and commitments and should be used as significant tools. However, a monitoring of the implementation is crucial to prevent lip services and technical implementation without an adequate cultural implementation in the respective countries.



# Women in the Balkans / Southeast Europe

Gabriella Schubert

## Introduction

Women's issues in the post-communist countries of Southeast Europe have not attracted much attention so far. Women's issues, of course, are not only of great relevance to Southeast Europe, but also to Western Europe. The introduction of a gender quota mandating that women hold a minimum of 30% of supervisory posts in multinational companies, for instance, has in recent years been on the political agenda and the subject of long and heated debate in the German Bundestag. However, the position of women in Southeast Europe is much more complex than in any other region of Europe. In Southeast Europe, patriarchal values have traditionally been a dominant factor of social organization and were not eradicated either in communist or post-communist times. Women in Southeast Europe belong to the losers of the transition crisis as regards their social and economic status as well as their political representation, and the feminization of poverty and refugees. In my overview, I recapitulate the developments which have led to this result.

## Pre-modern masculinity and femininity concepts

The social frame within which gender relations and roles have developed in the past – particularly in the narrower Balkan region – was the extended family (the so-called *zadruga*), patrilineal associations based on consanguinity or fictive kinship (cf. among others Gesemann 1943, Kaser 1992 and 1995, Bremer 2001). In their classical form, these were fratristic associations, i.e. affiliations of brothers and their families. In times of the expanding Ottoman legacy in the Balkans after the battle of Kosovo (1389), they represented a sort of self-help and the prevailing principle of life organization of the Christian "Rajah" in economically and socially difficult and unsafe times.

In the patriarchal society, we can speak of a clear gender order, with the authority of men and a subordinated position of women. The patrilineality of the father's hereditary lineage regulated all kinship relations and all legal issues such as the right of ownership and the law of succession, but also the continuation of spiritual and cultural values such as, for example, the house patron ritual known as *slava*.

A stringent gender segregation and authority hierarchy based on differences in gender and age ruled the cohabitation of the members of the extended family. Male members formed the privileged group, which was clearly segregated from the underprivileged group of women. Women belonged to the joint ownership of men (cf.



Filipović 1954). When a woman married, she entered the household of her husband and had to fulfil there her role within the separated, hierarchically organized group of women. She was less the wife of a man than a member of her group (cf. Pantelić 1962, 117). That is why this environment is often mentioned as being nonsexual. Women communicated above all with women, men above all with men. This is nowadays still typical in rural communities in East-Anatolia.

Within the extended Balkan family there was a clear gender separation also in the daily duties. Man's exclusive task was to ensure the material basis of the family, to represent and to defend it against uncertainties and dangers from outside, to make formal decisions and important transactions. Woman's task was to ensure the biological continuity of the family, i.e. to bear children and to bring them up, to run the household and to do all appertaining works. Women's work was basically reproductive (for more details cf. Schubert 1993a, 175–179).

### **Code of patriarchal values**

The mental basis of the Balkan patriarchy was a man-centred “heroic” code of honour (in Gesemann 1943 called *humanitas heroica*), which, in the scientific literature, by Durkheim, Mauss, and Gesemann, is regarded as a “complete social phenomenon” respectively as a “hegemonic masculinity” by Connell/Messerschmidt (2005). Man acquired recognition by a heroic morality, honor, and loyalty, but above all, as a courageous, steadfast fighter in military conflicts. The concept of honor of the woman, on the other hand, was marked by chastity and modesty in public and in her behavior toward the male sex. Her sexual life was strictly regulated and under constant control. In her field, she could, however, also acquire authority as a good mother, educator, and moral counsellor of her children (cf. among others Vlahović 1954, 16ff.). Rihtman-Auguštin (1987) refers to the fact that there was a female subculture within the *zadruga* and women found hidden possibilities to get their ways and needs.

The patriarchal value code, which was valid for a long time, has survived the decay of the extended family organizations. Although the extended family already had begun to fade in the second half of 19th century and ceased to exist at the beginning of 20th century in wide parts of the region, basic mental factors inherent to them have survived to our time in spite of europeanization and global influence. They manifest themselves in everyday forms and models of behaviour.

### **Socialist gender conception**

After the Second World War, the socialist rulers wanted to enforce a radically changing conception of gender in their countries. By this time, as a result of the beginning urbanization, the full-scale industrialization, and the participation of

women in educational programs, the extended family had given way to the small family or the family of several generations in the narrower Balkan area.

The aim of the communist parties was to modernize the society and to equalize the two sexes, and consequently to ensure the participation of women in the construction of the socialist society.

The formal equalization was established by a number of laws concerning inheritance, divorce, and custody, as well as abortion. The access to education and employment of women was fixed in the constitutions. As a result, the number of employed women had grown steadily.<sup>1</sup>

It was, however, exceptional that women received leading positions; few women advanced beyond midlevel positions in communist political institutions, and, in the world of labor, they were rather engaged in labor-intensive and moderately paid sectors such as textile processing and clothing, in service industries, or in management. They also had fewer opportunities for advancement and further vocational training than men (Cenan 2005, 20 et seq., Renner/Ule 2005). Moreover, this emancipation project was above all relevant to urban women, so that the existing gap between towns' peoples and villagers widened.

The socialist woman should not only take an active role in the working process, but also fulfil her reproductive role as a "working-class mother." Women who gave birth to many children were honoured as "heroic mothers."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the sexual life of men and women, above all of women, was strictly controlled and extramarital sexual relations were strongly stigmatized. Family planning respective of contraception was exclusively a matter of the woman – with the consequence that abortions became a daily issue (Morokvašić 1987, Rašević 1993).

Altogether, women were torn between two clearly separated functional spheres, public and private, with a multiple strain. After her daily work outside her home, she had to do all the work in the household. Her double burden was aggravated by the common scarcity of goods, and also the insufficiency of public facilities for childcare. From the perspective of the Bulgarian woman, this is expressed in the following joke:

*The English, the French, and the Bulgarian woman*

*The British lady:* Behind her – an aristocratic origin; to her left – well-behaved children; to her right – a loyal husband; on her head – a small hat; in front of her – a bright future.

*The French madam:* Behind her – a stormy past; to her left – the husband; to her right – the lover; on her head – a big hat; in front of her – endless adventures.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance in Yugoslavia from 24.8% in 1954 to 34.5% in 1976 (Jalušić 1992, 11).

<sup>2</sup> To bear children according to Kassabova-Dincheva (2004, 157) "was not only a right, but also the duty of parents, above all of women".

*The Bulgarian woman:* Behind her – the anti-fascist fight; to her left – collective actions; to her right – housework; on her head – the husband and the children; in front of her – the five-year plan. (Vasilev 1990, 72; translated by: G. Schubert).

With the beginning of the European integration in the 1990s, there arose an increasing demand for gender equality and compatibility within the family. In connection with a slowly evolving differentiation of life styles and routine media coverage of that process, the relation of men and women to their bodies and sexuality changed. Where sexuality had been strictly taboo, now it became a central theme in the yellow press, in particular in women's magazines. A new femininity model developed: the idea of the attractive, self-confident woman with specific consumer behaviour (Cenan 2005, 31ff.). However, this was the perception only of town-dwellers.

In general, traditional gender relations and hierarchies have not much changed during socialist times; patriarchal values and structures were not eradicated, but the "family patriarch" was replaced by the authoritarian state (Kreisky 1996, 11).

### **After the system change**

After the decline of the socialist period, the Southeast European region experienced a difficult time of upheaval – accompanied by great hopes as well as harsh disappointment among many people concerned that their standard of living has not improved. At the same time, a bloody civil war exploded in the former Yugoslavia, accompanied by aggressive nationalism, heroism, and misogyny. In the former Yugoslavian civil wars, women were not only victims, affected by the loss of family members and violence. They also were those who advocated peace. This is, for instance, true for the Belgrade group of the "Women in Black" and the organizations "Lara" and "Horizonti" in Bosnia. Their activities had a signal effect for other women to take action and to connect the women's movement with the peace movement, to make a stand of consequential pacifism in opposition to the masculine ideal of the nationalists. Even if Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia are already members of the European Union, nearly all Southeast European states still, today, face significant transition problems and adjustment disorders, with massive social problems and distortions. This, of course, affects the situation of women as well as gender relations. Many indicators point to the deterioration in the social, political, and health status of women after 1989. This is also true for men, but women have been confronted with specific challenges.

During the transition phase, an atomization of families could be observed. The withdrawal of many people into their family lives offered them a sort of comfort and protection against uncertainties and menaces. Both sexes were affected by the loss of the traditional job market and by unemployment which still lingers between 17% and 40% (cf. Solidar Suisse), but women were more likely than men to be-

come unemployed and had more difficulty finding new jobs. Quite often, husbands who lost their jobs were no longer able to fulfil their traditional role as the breadwinner of their families. They experienced a harsh dismantling of their masculinity and their traditional role as the head of the family, while their wives left their home to search for employment in the West and were compelled to take over the responsibility for their families, even if they performed menial work. Traditional gender roles were reversed. Poverty and unemployment forced many women to the very margins of society where tens of thousands of the most desperate end up in prostitution.

Gudac-Dodić (2006, 127), among others, refers to the fact that Serbian wives are increasingly less able than men to cope with the challenges of transition such as the collapsed economy, the halt to privatization and the lack of all the benefits they were granted by the socialist Yugoslavian state. In the impoverished Serbian society, women increasingly resume their traditional roles as housewives and mothers or have to decide between career and family. The same can be observed in other Southeast-European societies. Women still suffer considerable disadvantages in employment, with a segregated labor market and a wide gender gap in payment. The wages of women in industry and services are only about 70% of those of men. Moreover, they are responsible for the bringing up of children and taking care of elder family members, as well as the financial support of the family in a difficult economic crisis. Even more complicated is the situation of women belonging to ethnic minorities such as the Roma as well as single or divorced mothers who are totally dependent on their work. Women who decide to set up their own business also encounter great obstacles from creditors, suppliers, and customers since men dominate the world of business and women are very often not taken seriously.

On the other hand, after the system change and in the course of the political swing to the right, a new patrimonialization has developed: While women during socialism stood in the centre of revolutionary change, in the post-socialist society they once again became the object of ideological interpolation. The construction of new identities and the strengthening of the nation states were accompanied by the return to traditional values concentrating on the trinity of “native country, nation, and religion” (more detailed cf. Rener/Ule 2005). Neoliberal values of the market economy and individual freedom have asserted themselves and masculinity drove them as an engine. In this connection, right ideologists referring to European patterns, demanded the return of women to their traditional roles as mother and guardian of the family. They argued that only a woman devoting herself exclusively to her family is able to transmit traditional values and a national identity to the young generation. She is expected to protect the biological survival and the moral progress of the nation. The concept of the social renewal in post-socialist countries is closely tied to demographic renewal and the ban of abortion. According to Rener and Ule (2005, 105), the main interest of the state is to strengthen the classification of “public” men and “private” women. The re-delegation of women to privacy was accompanied by her social pacification: While at the end of the 1980s many women

had taken part in demonstrations and movements that aimed for the implementation of democracy; now their public presence is quite weak.

One of the most striking changes brought about by transition was the dramatic decline of female representation in political organizations. Women, consequently, organized themselves outside political parties in various NGOs such as the "Gender Task Force" or "B.a.B.e." (Be active, Be emancipated) in Croatia, "Amica" in Bosnia and Kosovo, the "Bulgarian Fund for Women," and so on. They promote the implementation of women's rights, provide juridical assistance, pursue SOS phones for domestic violence, and finance scientific studies on discrimination against women.

### **Prostitution and trafficking in women**

The explosive increase of prostitution and trafficking in women in the former socialist states is one of the main problems in women's welfare. Prostitution, as a fairly important branch of the consumer society and sex industry, has grown significantly in Southeast Europe since the system change. It has become an important economic factor. Members of the peacekeeping forces and aid organizations stationed in the region have contributed to this situation to a considerable extent. In Bosnia, the number of hidden prostitutes in 2005, coming from Moldavia, Romania, and the Ukraine was estimated at 10,000. They were distributed among approximately 350 brothels. They were often enlisted in Timișoara and brought to the so-called Arizona market of Brčko in Bosnia-Herzegovina or to Novi Sad in Serbia. Here, according to Poulin (2005), real "women's markets" have developed, at which Romanian traders auction women. Let me mention the 22-year-old Ukraine girl Olena Popik, mother of a three year old child who in November 2004 was delivered by her pimps to the hospital of Mostar where she died of aids, syphilis, pneumonia, drug overdose, and tuberculosis.

Domestic violence against women is also a problem in Southeast Europe. It is not a subject of legislation because it is usually regarded as a private matter that does not need to be addressed by public policy. In many countries, a machismic, heroic concept has created an image of women intended to represent the so-called "turbo-folk" music genre, a popular musical presentation in which women dressed in erotic attire are accompanied by accordion and oriental sounds. Open sexism is omnipresent in Southeast Europe at the workplace, in the media, in advertisements, and in politics. In the media of the Balkan countries, "women are reduced to their bodies and their appearances," as underscored by Sanja Sarnavka, head of "B.a.B.e." This often goes hand in hand with nationalism, as could be observed in Serbia during the Milošević era. The new rulers gave priority to the lulling and pompous turbo-folk music represented by, among others, "Ceca" (Svetlana Ražnatović), and banning the supposedly decadent music styles such as rock.

### Concepts of masculinity and femininity in our days

Currently, hybrid, overlapping, and also contradictory concepts of masculinity and femininity can be observed in Southeast Europe: They oscillate between global and local images mixed with value positions and perceptions of gender roles which mainly follow traditional patterns.

Marriage, family, and kinship still are given the highest importance in life. Behind the facade of modernity, traditional values and role behaviors are still in effect, and polls confirm that many women voluntarily and consciously choose this role (Blagojević 2004). Patrilineality is still valid and an integral part of several custom complexes including, for example, the ritual of the *slava*, the annual house patron ceremony. Married women in orthodox families still celebrate the house patron of their husband's family and only exceptionally that of their own. In Montenegro, it remains an unwritten rule that women voluntarily waive their claim of the parental inheritance in favor of their brothers. Male progeny is still a desirable family aim and the birth of a son is by far more valuable than that of a daughter. From the male perspective, "the woman of his dreams" is a diligent housewife who lasciviously displays sexual stimuli even when doing housework. In the yellow press and in men's magazines you can find numerous examples of this image (cf. for instance HELLO! Srbija, 25 July 2011).

The present division of roles in the family also mainly follows the rooted habit. This is, for instance, specified by Vladimirova (2007) for Bulgaria: While women had enjoyed the highest employment rate during socialism, today they spend most of their time on housework. Housework, nursing, and education of the children, home work, etc. are the exclusive obligation of the woman, even if she is employed and her husband jobless or a pensioner. Men will "help" at best. The man is still regarded in his traditional role – as the family breadwinner who can work without interruption, day and night, seven days per week, throughout the year.

### Beginning of change?

However, according to Vladimirova (2007), changes can be observed in the attitude of youngsters toward marriage and gender roles. They develop a growing readiness to participate in the house work, while young women follow the opposite trend. This process is possibly also connected with a new model of family life – without marriage (a practice which has developed very fast over the last 15 years in Bulgaria). Inquiries about this trend are still pending. However, it is not supported by legislation. In June, 2009, a new family law was approved by the Bulgarian parliament. It succeeded the old family law from 1985 and was to take effect in October 2009. The law provided that both heterosexual and homosexual partnerships should be equally recognized. Sharp protests from conservative circles and the Orthodox Church prevented this from taking effect, although all partnerships are already recognized in other laws such as the law against domestic violence and the

laws that regulate maternity and parental time (cf. European Gender Equality Law Review No. 2/2009).

Over all, women's issues in Southeast Europe need serious consideration in the public discourse. This, however, will be possible only if women participate in decision-making.

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# Women are one of Southeast Europe's most valuable assets

Marije Cornelissen

I am a huge fan of the Southeast European women's rights movement and convinced that the work of women's rights activists in the region deserves much more attention. Almost all of them should receive human rights awards, medals, royal distinctions, and a star on the feminist walk of fame.

I became such a fan of Balkan women while I was member of the European Parliament where I was spokesperson on the enlargement of my political group, the Greens. I travelled to the region almost every month and met with ministers, parliamentarians, and EU delegations at various conferences and delegation meetings. During all my visits, I always tried to skip some lunches and sometimes boring afternoon sessions in order to meet with civil society organizations, especially those dealing with transparency, with LGBT rights, and with women's rights. In these meetings, my interlocutors informed me about the situation on the ground and about the struggles the organizations face in order to be heard by governments and politicians. Eventually, after a few years of listening and trying to get a full and clearer picture, I decided to commit myself to assisting them as much as possible.

In 2012, I therefore initiated a European Parliament report on women's rights in Balkan accession countries, which was voted on in 2013<sup>1</sup>. For this report, we interviewed more than 50 organizations, governmental institutions, ombudsmen and women, and everyone else remotely involved across and within the region. In order to make sure that the report wouldn't end up in a drawer, I broke with parliamentary tradition and named countries by name. The 2013 approach differed substantially from the previous European Parliament report on women's rights in Balkan countries from 2008,<sup>2</sup> which remained general in its assessments by stating for example: "Notes with concern that, despite the legislative framework recently put in place in most of the Balkan countries, domestic violence and verbal abuse remain present." (2008 / p. 5)

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<sup>1</sup> Marije Cornelissen (rapporteur): *Women's rights in Balkan accession countries, European Parliament 2013* <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0136+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

<sup>2</sup> Zita Gurmai (rapporteur): *Report on the situation of women in the Balkans (2008/2119 (INI)) Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*; <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0435+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

These kind of statements, unfortunately, meant that no individual country felt specifically addressed. I could just imagine Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski from Macedonia (FYROM) thinking, "Well, that is obviously true for Serbia or Albania, but why should I do anything about domestic violence?" Or Prime Minister Milo Đukanović of Montenegro, "Sure, there are only very few women in leading political positions, and the other Balkan countries should certainly do something about that, but in Montenegro this would hardly be achievable as there are just too few suitable women to take higher level political positions." For some reason, I always tend to think about these two gentlemen in particular. Therefore, I decided that neither they nor other gentlemen in power could get away with this in my report.

The 2013 report contained specific action points for each country. To illustrate, let me name just a few of the six to 10 recommendations each country received: The report called on *Albania* to propose gender-sensitive reforms to the legislation on property rights, the penal code, the electoral law, and labor law. It admonished *Bosnia and Herzegovina* to ensure uniform, high-level, maternity protection for women in all entities. *Croatia* was encouraged to fully implement its legislation "stipulating 40% women on election lists for local and regional self-government bodies, Parliament, and the European Parliament." It called on *Kosovo* to promote a country-wide SOS hotline for victims of domestic violence. It commended *Macedonia* for its ambitious action plans and strategies, but at the same time criticized the fragmented implementation of those plans. The report expressed concern over the low number of complaints of discrimination and violence due to lack of awareness in *Montenegro*. It told *Serbia* to improve the administrative capacity of bodies dealing with gender equality and to enhance its cooperation with civil society.

While drafting the report and prior to voting on it in the European Parliament, ambassadors from the named Balkan countries came to lobby me and tried to persuade me to drop criticism of their country from the final text. However, and fortunately, I was backed by my colleagues on the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) and was able to keep everything in. The report was voted in plenary in March 2013. In my plenary speech, I said that hopefully in a couple of years we could look at the action points addressed in the report and would be able to conclude that the whole report could be torn up and thrown away because all issues had been resolved. We are not there yet.

For about a year after the vote in European Parliament, I didn't hear much about the report. I inquired of the governments in the region about the state of play, with all of them replying that they were "working on the issues." That was basically it, until I was invited to a conference in Podgorica on women's rights in Balkan accession countries in spring 2014.

During coffee break, women's rights activists approached me one by one to express their gratitude for the report and to tell me what they themselves had done

with it so far. I was totally amazed by what I apparently had unwittingly done. The women of Southeast Europe had taken the report and run with it. They had used the action points to the fullest extent, confronting their governments with the report to demand their rights and to force reform.

An initiative report by the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee in the European Parliament never previously elicited such tremendous effects and response. If a report from FEMM was noticed at all, there were one or two references to it in the press, you might get a smile from the respective EU commissioner, and – if you're lucky – an audience with a minister. That this specific report triggered so much attention is most of all thanks to all those women who managed to turn it into a powerful instrument in their struggle for women's rights. That is why I am a fan. It is Southeast European women's amazing ability to grasp opportunities whenever they arise.

The struggle is not done. It's not even close to being finished. There is much more to be gained for women in all fields: the labor market, politics, entrepreneurship, sexual and reproductive rights, the fight against violence, and so much more. I am firmly convinced that the women's rights movement across the Western Balkan region can and will use all possible instruments to make progress a reality. And for that, the EU accession process offers a number of instruments and tools:

### **1. Implementation of *Acquis Communautaire***

First, there is of course the *Acquis Communautaire* in the field of women's rights. According to the legislation that the European Union has adopted over the past decades, every woman in the EU has the right to equal pay, equal opportunities, equal working conditions. Every woman has a right to equal access to training, to social security, to goods and services, to insurance. Every mother has the right to a minimum of 14 weeks maternity leave, to parental leave, and to return to the same job with the same salary and same tasks after leave. This is to name but a few core rights. Every country that wants to join the EU has to align its legislation and provisions according to the *Acquis* and ensure these women's rights, as well as to prove that they have been implemented.

### **2. Negotiations on accession reforms**

A second instrument is the negotiation process itself on EU accession reforms. Applicant countries and the EU Commission negotiate all chapters and the conditions under which each applicant country will join the EU. Countries not only have to adopt the *acquis*, they also have to implement far-reaching reforms in almost all policy areas. And most policy areas incorporate gender aspects, as we know, if only because women are half the population. Thus, EU gender-equality

principles are an important aspect for EU candidate countries and they have to comply with that in many fields:

Countries have to reform their pension system, their business environment, their social security system, their social dialogue, their labor market policies, and much more. This is the moment not only to modernize these policies and to make them future-proof, but also to make them gender-sensitive. The EU negotiation process is decisive and women's organizations need to be at the table when their governments and the EU Commission discuss reforms.

We can learn a lot from the experiences in Croatia and Iceland for the involvement of civil society in the negotiation process. A couple of years ago, I organized a hearing in the European Parliament on "transparency in the accession process"<sup>3</sup> and invited parliamentarians and civil society representatives from Iceland, Croatia, and Montenegro to look at lessons learnt. Marina Škrabalo from Croatia, an accomplished researcher and civil society actor, wrote a marvelous discussion paper for it, and the hearing offered important insights for everyone.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to transparency and CSO involvement during the EU negotiation process, Croatia and Iceland were, for the most part, total opposites. Croatia kept civil society out of most of the process and kept most information out of public reach. Only at a very late stage of the negotiations were civil society organizations involved at all and informed of what was happening. They had united in the Platform 43 and demanded public disclosure of all negotiation positions.

Maybe it was because the referendum was in sight; the government probably realized that it had to start involving people if it wanted the people's support for accession.

Iceland, with its tradition of transparency, did it completely differently. They made everything public on a special website the moment it was available. Sometimes, Iceland annoyed the EU Commission and the European Council because every single piece of paper was publically published as a matter of course, immediately after the Icelandic ministry received it. In Iceland, officials have to receive specific permission – permission that is hardly ever granted – to be allowed to keep information confidential. The process took quite some time as well, because the Icelandic parliament made sure there were consultations and round tables about

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<sup>3</sup> Škrabalo, M.: 2012, *Transparency in retrospect: preliminary lessons from Croatia's EU accession process*, Discussion paper commissioned by the Greens / EFA in the European Parliament, Zagreb: GONG Research Centre, Croatia, available at: <http://www.franziska-brantner.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Transparency-in-retrospect.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Enhancing the transparency and inclusiveness of the EU accession process (own-initiative opinion) Rapporteur: Marina Škrabalo, Brussels 19 July 2014; available at: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.rex-opinions.30766>. See also: Irena Đokić and Marijana Sumpor: *The Role of Croatian Civil Society Organizations in the European Union Accession Process*, Zagreb 2013, available at: <http://www.tacso.org/doc/Role%20of%20Croatian%20CSOs%20in%20EU%20Accession%20process-final.pdf>.

every policy issue before deciding and voting on anything. “Democracy takes time, but it’s well worth it,” said an Icelandic parliamentarian at the hearing.

The result a year later we all know. Iceland has by now dropped its EU accession request, while Croatia has become a full member of the EU. As I always say at conferences about the enlargement process, “What everyone should aim for is the process of Iceland, with the results of Croatia.” Organizations from countries at the start of the accession negotiations, such as Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania, can use the experiences of Croatia and Iceland to their advantage. Especially when Chapter 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights, Chapter 24 on justice, freedom, and security, and Chapter 19 on social policy and employment are opened, gender equality should be high on the agenda.

### **3. The Southeast Europe Semester**

The year 2015 will be the first year of implementation of the so called SEE Semester for economic governance. But who has heard of it, who understands what it is and what it will mean for countries and citizens? Hardly anyone yet.

In the European Union, the European Semester for economic governance was established in 2011 and aims at ensuring that EU member states keep their budgetary and economic policies in line with their EU commitments. Each year the cycle of economic policy coordination starts with the Annual Growth Survey in November. This is a bizarre name for a huge stack of statistical analyses of the current situation in all EU member states.

Member states are assessed on all kinds of indicators, including, of course, whether they manage to stay under the 3% budget deficit and the 60% state-debt marks, but also on how they are progressing toward the EU 2020 goals – or not progressing, as is more likely the case.

In its Annual Growth Survey, the European Commission also sets out the priorities (five, in all this year) for the union’s economy as a whole, including items such as “pursue fiscal consolidation” and “combat social consequences of the crisis.” Member states have until April 30 to write their National Reform Programs in which they outline their reform plans for the year in order to meet the requests and goals. On that basis, the EU Commission writes country-specific recommendations in early June. They can be quite detailed and extensive. The member states are then expected to incorporate these recommendations into their national budgets.

A version of this process, adapted for the economic and governance situation and the existing processes, will be implemented in Southeast Europe in the coming year and every year thereafter. It goes without saying that the Southeast Europe Semester offers opportunities to improve women’s rights that should not be missed. Generally speaking, whenever you hear the word “economic” or even “financial and budgetary,” alarm bells need to start going off, because economic policy is



almost always gender policy. The reform programs are going to address pension reform, social security, tax systems, second earner disincentives, housing policies, property policies, etc. All are areas with a strong gender dimension.

Women are in many areas the worst affected by any crisis. They are the majority of those living in poverty; they are the majority of those unemployed or in precarious employment; they are the majority of those with small pensions or small social benefits that leave them under the poverty line; they are the majority of those affected by discrimination and violence.

But women are also the people who can bring solutions. One of the most effective ways of combating business corruption, for example, is promoting female entrepreneurship. Recent studies have shown that women entrepreneurs are far less likely to be corrupt than men.<sup>5</sup> This is not because women are intrinsically better people. The jury is still out on that one. It is mainly because if you want some really profitable cronyism, you need cronies. And if you want some really effective widespread corruption, you need a network of likeminded corrupt people, a network also known as the "old boys network." The fact that women are not in old boys networks has many disadvantages for women, but it also means that women entrepreneurs are, on the whole, uncorrupted. Most women simply don't have the cronies or the network for it.

Another example where women are an important part of the solution is promoting Roma rights. The most effective way of promoting social and economic progress of any group in a situation of underdevelopment is to educate girls. Educating Roma girls benefits all of society.

Specifically for the Balkans, I think women are the best chance for peace and reconciliation. Of those involved in, for instance, the football riots between Albanian and Serbian football supporters after the drone incident, I think I can safely say that around about zero of the perpetrators were women. Meanwhile, of those involved in cross-border communication and cooperation, the majority are women.

The Southeast Europe Semester for economic governance can be a wonderful instrument. It has all the potentials, but it still needs to be seen whether the Semester is reduced to a deal behind closed doors between the ministry of finance and the European Commission. It could be a wonderful instrument if the national parliaments, the media, civil society, and the public are not kept out of it. However, there is every reason to fear this happening.

It will be an instrument to force reforms that take people out of poverty and to improve life for all citizens, if the national reform programs are debated in public by parliaments and with civil society and are covered by media. This is where the

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<sup>5</sup> See for example: Claudia Trentini / Malinka Koparanova: *Corruption and Entrepreneurship: Does Gender matter?* UNECE, September 2013; [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/oes/disc\\_papers/ECE\\_DP\\_2013-1.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/oes/disc_papers/ECE_DP_2013-1.pdf)

women's movements come in: They can get the EU delegation in their countries to come and explain exactly what is happening; they can try to get a draft of their country's reform program; they can highlight the gender aspects and commend or criticize the content of what their governments propose; they can call on members of Parliament to debate the programs; they can try to get media interested in following the process.

Let me conclude that I have faith in the EU accession process. It can be the best thing that ever happened to women in Southeast Europe, just as it was in the EU countries in Western Europe where women's rights really took flight with EU legislation. But reforms and rights will have meaning and impact only if there are people in society to shape them, to make them widely known, to use them to improve lives. And, Southeast Europe is very lucky in this respect, because Southeast Europe has its women as one of its most valuable assets for the future.



# **Women's Entrepreneurship in Southeast Europe**

Ana Carević and Dragan Sabljic

## **Summary**

In Southeast Europe, women face many obstacles related to traditional gender roles that affect their economic opportunities. In these countries, which all aspire to become part of the European Union in the coming years, women entrepreneurs remain an untapped source of business and job creation. Women's entrepreneurship in Southeast European countries is an imperative due to its economic potential. As the global economic crisis affected companies owned by women, it was shown that these companies were and are socially more sensitive because women are less likely than men to fire employees and are less willing to take unnecessary risks, making their companies more resistant to the consequences of the economic crisis. The Gender Task Force (GTF) Initiative for Sustainable Growth is currently implementing a regional project called "Women's Entrepreneurship: A Job Creation Engine for Southeast Europe." The overall goal of the project is to promote women's entrepreneurship in Southeast Europe through combined efforts of both public and private sectors. The synergy of this project already has fostered a significant sharing of sound business practices among countries. This project has led to the achievement of some important advances in all the beneficiary countries. Promotion and development of women's entrepreneurship has improved significantly since the implementation of the project. Croatia remains the policy leader in the region, with its second Strategy and Action Plan for Women's Entrepreneurship, led by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts. The GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth has contributed to both actions and is a consultative partner of the ministry. Project goals are achieved in this way and the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth is able to play an intermediary role with other Southeast Europe countries, including, for example, Montenegro, a country using the Croatian experience to draft its own strategy and action plan in 2015.

## **Women's Entrepreneurship in Southeast Europe**

In Southeast Europe, women face many obstacles related to traditional gender roles, obstacles that affect their economic opportunities. In most cases, women have no ownership of assets, women business owners are insufficiently respected, and they have either poor or no government support. Several studies show that many women across the region want to establish businesses or expand or introduce innovation to their existing businesses. However, high interest rates and high demands for

collateral make business unattractive or out of reach to most women. All of the aforementioned factors are important hindrances in the development of more prominent women's entrepreneurship. In addition, many women are often held back by low confidence in their ability to succeed in business. Difficult access to information and financing, as well as pervasive cultural barriers are among the most important challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the region. In Southeast Europe, gender inequality remains a big issue within labor markets. In recent years, although many women have benefitted from increased economic opportunities, most women still work in lower-paid, part-time, or temporary jobs. In Southeast European countries, which all aspire to become part of the European Union in the coming years, women entrepreneurs are still an untapped source of business and job creation.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),<sup>1</sup> the growth potential of women's entrepreneurship is increasingly evident globally. Fully 38% of all registered small businesses worldwide are women-owned businesses. Women are starting businesses at a faster rate than men in many OECD economies. In some of these countries, these firms are even growing at faster rates than those owned by men. Women-owned businesses create jobs and reduce poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Studies on the influence of gender on entrepreneurship show that women are more likely to follow non-entrepreneurial career choices in order to accomplish work-life balance. Women in Southeast Europe lack social infrastructure, such as day care, elderly care, etc. Women also lack access to capital due mainly to discrimination in property inheritance, which means they have less collateral with which to underwrite bank loans. Therefore, they must often rely on family and personal resources. Banks frequently refuse women loans, considering them as unreliable, although they are proven to be more responsible than men in making payments. In Southeast Europe, women are left with no alternative but to rely on expensive microloans with interest rates of 18% and higher. Despite their strong private/family networks, women entrepreneurs lack systematic support and need capacity building. Entrepreneurial infrastructure (business development centers, incubators, and businesswomen associations, etc.) for women is sparse and/or inadequate, particularly in rural areas. How to unlock women's hidden potential – their human and social capital – as entrepreneurs and job creators remains the challenge.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Growing Economies through Women's Entrepreneurship*, OECD, 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/industry/pre-g20eventgrowingeconomiesthroughwomensentrepreneurship.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda 2010 - The turning point on poverty: background paper on gender*, Department for International Development (DFID), 2010, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45249900.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *SEE Women's entrepreneurship: Best Practices 2014*, Regional Center for Gender Equality, Zagreb, 2014, [http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE\\_WE\\_Best\\_Practices\\_2014.pdf](http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE_WE_Best_Practices_2014.pdf), p. 7

Women's entrepreneurship in Southeast European countries is an imperative due to its economic potential. As the global economic and financial crisis affected companies owned by women, it was shown that these companies were and are socially more sensitive because women are less likely to fire employees and are less willing to take unnecessary risks, making their companies more resistant to the consequences of the economic crisis. In many cases nowadays, women start businesses out of necessity, for economic survival of their families, which is especially the case when faced with unemployment. One of the reasons why they choose to be self-employed is the flexibility that it affords them to combine work and family life, whereby working from home can be an added value.

The GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth is currently implementing the regional project "Women's Entrepreneurship: A Job Creation Engine for Southeast Europe." The project began in April 2012 and will be completed in December 2015. It is coordinated by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and co-implemented by the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth and the Southeast European Center for Entrepreneurial Learning (SEECCEL). The project is implemented in nine Southeast European Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo,<sup>4</sup> Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey. The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

The overall goal of the project is to promote women's entrepreneurship in Southeast Europe through combined efforts of both public and private sectors. It aims to achieve cooperation between lawmakers, parliament members, civil society, economic chambers, women entrepreneurs' networks and associations, and women entrepreneurs themselves as the beneficiaries of this project, for the purpose of promoting and empowering women's entrepreneurship. This project promotes best policy practices in women's entrepreneurship in line with the Small Business Act for Europe and contributes to the capacity building of national and regional women entrepreneurs' networks and associations. The project aims to initiate and improve policy support frameworks for women's entrepreneurship in beneficiary countries based on best practices.

The synergy of this project already has fostered a significant sharing of sound business practices among countries. For example, the government of Montenegro has used the Croatian model and expertise in the development of their Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy that is expected to be adopted during 2015. Southeast European governments are realizing that supporting women's entrepreneurship makes good economic sense. Nevertheless, taking into account women's great potential, women are still underrepresented in business, although they are well educated and have a different approach to doing business that could enrich the

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<sup>4</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

society and facilitate the development of new jobs. They demonstrate creativity through social innovations and new models of entrepreneurship that stress sustainability, not only the generation of profit, which brings a long-term and broader added value to our societies.<sup>5</sup>

Despite women being the majority of the population, all Southeast European countries have considerably more male than female entrepreneurs. The percentages for male entrepreneurs are usually twice as high as those for female entrepreneurs. Despite the fact that women are consistently more highly represented than men in higher education, they still are not entering into business in proportionate numbers. Thus, in the last few years, Southeast European countries have been preparing for the implementation of their strategic approach to women's entrepreneurship. In this process, Croatia and Turkey are at the forefront. Croatia is a leading country in the EU for its strategic approach in supporting women's entrepreneurship. It serves as a role model to other countries in the region that have made use of specific policy measures supporting women's entrepreneurship. For example, the Ministry of Economy of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia integrated measures for subsidizing child care for women establishing businesses in 2012. Also in 2012, governmental representatives of Albania made a study visit to Croatia to better understand the Croatian model of support for women entrepreneurs, especially funding guarantees. Women entrepreneurs in Croatia have institutionally supported access to finance that includes guarantees from the Croatian Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Investments (HAMAG), and loans with subsidized interest rates at 2% from the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR).<sup>6</sup>

The first Strategy and Action Plan for Women's Entrepreneurship was adopted by the Croatian government in 2010 for the period 2010-2013, and as a continuation the second Strategy and Action plan for Women's Entrepreneurship was adopted in 2014 for the period 2014-2020. As a result of more than a decade of systematic financing of women entrepreneurs, Croatia is a leader in the Southeast European region related to policies, resources, and guarantees for women's entrepreneurship. In addition, Croatia plays a leading role among EU countries, since it has supported women's entrepreneurship in continuity since 2003 and works actively on knowledge exchange and transfer of good practices.<sup>7</sup>

**Turkey**, although it does not have a specific Women's Entrepreneurship policy framework, is drawing attention by its profound entrepreneurial spirit, whereby women are connected in strong, influential, and proactive business women organi-

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<sup>5</sup> *SEE Women's entrepreneurship: Best Practices 2014*, Regional Center for Gender Equality, Zagreb, 2014, [http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE\\_WE\\_Best\\_Practices\\_2014.pdf](http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE_WE_Best_Practices_2014.pdf), p. 15

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13-14

zations. A good example is Kagider Turkish Women Entrepreneurs Association, which ensures that Turkish women entrepreneurs are connected to each other and are part of global entrepreneurship trends. Turkey has made great strides in securing access to finance for women entrepreneurs from the private sector, with banks specializing in loans for women entrepreneurs. The Turkish example shows that the key is networking – having brought together 225 businesswomen associations under a joint web portal. Turkey also has a Gender Parity Task force to foster public-private collaboration on closing the economic participation gender gap by up to 10%.<sup>8</sup> In Turkey, there is an institutional framework dealing with women's entrepreneurship established at national and local levels, including the government body KOSGEB (Republic of Turkey – Small and Medium Enterprise Development Organization). Also, strategic and policy documents including Women's Entrepreneurship (WE) are in place. A good example is the Turkey Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2016. KOSGEB coordinates all activities related to women's entrepreneurship in Turkey, and the selection of KOSGEB as one of the project partners ensured significant project results and visibility of women's entrepreneurship topics among decision makers.

Advances in Women's Entrepreneurship policies and practices in other countries of Southeast Europe:

**Albania** – Women's entrepreneurship is stressed in several documents of the government of Albania, and the country's Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, and Entrepreneurship is drafting for the first time a new SME Strategy and Action Plan with a special section on women's entrepreneurship for the period 2014-2020. The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2013-2020 includes a gender approach, one aim of which is that the share of SMEs run by women shall increase from 26% in 2011 to 40% in 2020.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Action Plan 2014-2016 is now being elaborated by the government. Gathering data on women's entrepreneurship is still a challenge, as is the lack of a practical program in place for government support to women entrepreneurs.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** – In 2012, the first WE database was developed with the technical support of the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth and analyzing more than 10,000 businesses, one third of the total in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the women's entrepreneurship database, women have majority ownership in 21% of businesses. In the Bosnia and Herzegovina Gender Action Plan 2013- 2017, there are two measures that directly address women's entrepreneurship. In Republic of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 15

<sup>9</sup> *Draft National Strategy for Development and Integration 2013-2020, Republic of Albania, 2013*, [http://www.dsdcc.gov.al/dsdcc/pub/nsdi\\_draft\\_april\\_2013\\_1538\\_1.pdf](http://www.dsdcc.gov.al/dsdcc/pub/nsdi_draft_april_2013_1538_1.pdf)



Srpska the Law on Development of SMEs has a chapter about women's entrepreneurship. Furthermore, in the Republic of Srpska, there is a guarantee fund for women entrepreneurs. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a women's entrepreneurship grant fund that was put back into place in 2012 as a result of advocacy efforts.<sup>10</sup> Beginning in 2013, the annual reporting forms for businesses in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina contain a question on the gender of owners, easing future data collection and analysis of women-owned businesses toward establishment of a systematic database for women's entrepreneurship for the whole country.

**Kosovo**<sup>11</sup> – In 2012, Kosovo was the first and still is the only country to introduce a checkbox regarding the gender of the business owners when registering a new business, which provides an important basis for future data collection. The Kosovo Parliament has a special women's caucus that promotes women's political, social, and economic empowerment. A Kosovo Women's Chamber of Commerce was formed in December 2012 to complement the strongest women's entrepreneurship organization SHE-ERA with 280 member associations. A number of small schemes and budget allocations are now in place to support women's entrepreneurship, in particular for rural women.<sup>12</sup>

The **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** – Economic empowerment of women is a strategic priority of the Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020 and the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2013-2016. The Macedonian Ministry for Economy SME Sector has had a unit for Women's Entrepreneurship and a fund for women's business start-ups since 2012, as well as support measures for child care services for newly established women's businesses. Through cooperation with the non-governmental sector, the establishment of the Women's Entrepreneurship Platform with more than 60 member organizations and institutions provides a solid channel through which information from various actors can influence legislative change, as well as the strategies for further development. In 2013, the process of coordination between the Ministries of Economy and Interior with the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth and Association of Business Women led to establishment of the first WE database and statistics gathering on women's entrepreneurship. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the only Southeast European country to produce a database that is administered by the

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<sup>10</sup> *SEE Women's entrepreneurship: Best Practices 2014*, Regional Center for Gender Equality, Zagreb, 2014, [http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE\\_WE\\_Best\\_Practices\\_2014.pdf](http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE_WE_Best_Practices_2014.pdf), p. 22

<sup>11</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>12</sup> *SEE Women's entrepreneurship: Best Practices 2014*, Regional Center for Gender Equality, Zagreb, 2014, [http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE\\_WE\\_Best\\_Practices\\_2014.pdf](http://www.gtf.hr/media/5447/SEE_WE_Best_Practices_2014.pdf), p. 25

Ministry of Economy, which continues to update the database and produce reports.<sup>13</sup> The percentage of businesses with majority women ownership is 32%.

**Moldova** – In 2012, The Ministry of Economy developed the Law on Entrepreneurship and an SME Strategy for the period 2012-2020, which, for the first time, includes gender indicators. The Moldovan Civil Society has numerous national and local businesswomen associations active in promoting women's entrepreneurship and united in the Women's Entrepreneurship Platform since 2013.

**Montenegro** – Women's entrepreneurship was incorporated in the SME strategy 2011-2015. Montenegro is using Croatian experience for development of their Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy and Action Plan, which is currently being drafted by the government in cooperation with Croatian experts and the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth, and will be adopted in 2015. Montenegro has also adopted an action plan for gender equality 2013-2017, which includes a separate pillar related to women's entrepreneurship. This action plan also consists of a budgetary allocation for women's entrepreneurship. In the Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro, there is a special credit line for women's entrepreneurship. However, collateral is still needed to secure loans.<sup>14</sup>

**Serbia** – The Ministry of Economy is drafting a Development of Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2014-2020 that includes a section on women's entrepreneurship. In the National Strategy for Improvement of the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality 2010-2015 and its Action Plan, one of the six main pillars is related to economic empowerment of women. The National Employment Strategy also has a chapter on WE. The AP Vojvodina Guarantee Fund has supported numerous business start-ups by women and their model has been shared with the Republic of Srpska Guarantee Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A new Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Development 2014 – 2020 will have as one of its six main pillars the empowerment of WE and youth entrepreneurs. A related Action Plan is being developed for its implementation. The Association of Business Women in Serbia has established a Public Advocacy Committee which addresses the problems and challenges that women entrepreneurs face.<sup>15</sup>

Regarding Women's entrepreneurship organizations in Southeast Europe, most of them represent largely mainstream, even conservative, women members who often don't share the same agenda as women/gender organizations and are seen as "too

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 26

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 28

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 29

patriarchal” in their position. This is not a new phenomenon, but has, in the course of the project, often been demonstrated. The fact remains that women’s NGOs can or could have offered a helping hand with access to projects, funding, networks, understanding of gender issues, language, etc. This is true especially because newer women entrepreneurs associations are often without professional staff, steady sources of funding (other than membership dues), large memberships, experience in running an NGO, etc. The GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth has improved their access to information and networking tremendously, and these women entrepreneur associations, in practically all cases, are involved in dialogue with their governments, but without necessarily enjoying the support of the women’s NGO networks. Their viability overall has increased and will be more the focus in the period 2016-2020.

Political risks have taken their toll in several countries, by either halting or slowing down progress. The lack of ownership of the databases of Women Entrepreneurs is indicative of the inability of the ministries and governments to implement policy reforms and reach consensus around even the most basic of issues. Elections and political instability can be serious factors for ongoing policy dialogue. In post-election actions, the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth will renew links to institutional/governmental actors where needed to ensure that no backlash occurs regarding Women’s Entrepreneurship. More attention needs to be given to IPA planning and strategic documents of the European Commission, as Women’s Entrepreneurship needs wider recognition as an important potential. The Southeast Europe 2020 strategy inclusion of Women’s Entrepreneurship under one priority, after advocacy by the GTF Initiative for Sustainable Growth and Women’s Entrepreneurship regional actors is one example of how difficult introducing this issue can be in the region, but also on EU level as well.

The opportunities and potentials of Women’s Entrepreneurship remain largely untapped. However, improved policy measures and tendencies towards strategic approaches give reason for optimism in a region burdened by economic crisis and stagnation.

# Women in Serbia

Vera Gudac Dodić

The text points to certain indicators of the position and aspects of life of women in Serbia, both in the time of socialism and in the context of modernity. The analysis is directed toward two important segments in the life of women: parenthood and professional occupation.

Gender relations in Serbia, established through the overlapping of patriarchy and modernity, inherited life patterns, proclaimed principles of gender equality, and various practices, represent the image of the society. Numerous changes made in the time of socialism, the circumstances of economic and social destruction during the last decade of the 20th century, and the post-socialist transition left a mark on the position of women and shaped their lives in many ways.

## Women and parenthood

Parenthood of women was influenced by various factors in Serbia in the socialist era, starting with the legacy of still preserved traditional values, but also proclaimed emancipatory policies toward women, and socialist legislation. The stronghold of changes and transformations in gender relations was socialist legislation, by which such relations were standardized. Improvements caused by the modernization of the state were made in many areas, including the social protection of mother and child as well as the social care of children. A series of laws passed after the Second World War and related to the protection of mothers and children and the equalization of the legal status of men and women affected everyday life and the practice of child care.<sup>1</sup> The issue of motherhood was viewed as crucial. State care for mother and child was displayed in different ways, including, among others, by the mother's right to 90 days paid leave after childbirth. In the years to come, maternity leave was repeatedly prolonged until it finally extended to the time a child turned one year old. The idea of raising children under control of the socialist state and under the aegis of its ideology was present everywhere. The model of the communist socio-economic modernization of society favored the employment of women and otherwise proved affirmative in that regard, among other effects. It caused an in-

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the laws passed in the first post-war years are: Basic Law on Marriage (1946), Basic Law on Relations between Parent and Child (1947), Law on the Social Insurance of Workers, Officers and Clerks (1946), Act on the Protection of Employed Pregnant and Breastfeeding Mothers (1949) and others.

crease in women's professional activity. At the same time, the importance of maternity wasn't marginalized even for a moment. It was regarded as a matter of great importance, not only declaratively, in all the stages of the development of the socialist state. In accordance with this, it was expected that state institutions for childcare, organized in a way to be accessible to everyone, would reduce the conflict of roles and enable mothers to devote some time to professional activity. Continuous development of childcare facilities, although it was not uniform, marked the entire post-war period. The network of these institutions had neither equalized development nor even distribution.<sup>2</sup> Some of them were built before 1980s but the total number of them was the highest in the 1980s. The capacity of the institutions for pre-school children, however, was not sufficient. In Serbia, a little more than one fifth of the total number of children of preschool age was enrolled in them.

Social and political changes in socialism did not lead to the transformation of relations in a woman's private life. Gender inequalities still shaped the everyday family life. The conflict of roles and the problem of their harmonization was a key characteristic of everyday life for working women, wives, and mothers. The woman's status in socialism was continuously marked by overwork. The time required for housekeeping, actually the amount of time that women spent in performing everyday household activities, was not less than the time spent on professional, paid work. In fact, it was quite the opposite. One of the generators of gender inequality in the socialist state was a different participation of men and women in domestic labor. The division of family roles was characterized by an imbalance in the level of engagement of men and women both in domestic affairs and in the child's upbringing. The so-called parental time was not equally distributed. Everyday life revealed that even in this aspect of life, obligations of men and women were not equal. Additional work with children during their schooling also depended on mothers to a great extent.

The best illustration of such a situation is research conducted in the late 1950s in the Galenika factory in Belgrade where the majority of employees were women. According to this survey, in the majority of cases women performed all the housework (63% of cases), and men only seldom took care of their children (in 5% of cases). Employed women were most often assisted in household work by another woman, mother or mother-in-law, and they would rarely take it over in the entirety (6% of cases).<sup>3</sup> In times of socialism, the engagement of a woman within the family was not influenced by her education, her occupation, or life in the city. Women

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<sup>2</sup> Historical Archives of Belgrade, City Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Belgrade, Conference for the Social Activity of Women, box 8, The Number of Pre-school Institutions and the Participation of Children, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Neda Božinović: *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji u XIX i XX veku [The Women's Issue in Serbia in the 19th and 20th Centuries]*, (Belgrade: Nineteen Ninety-Four, Women in Black, 1996), p. 176.

worked less in the household only in cases in which they lived with an older woman, mother or mother-in-law.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts by the state to socialize housework or to take care of children by establishing kindergartens and day-care centers for children at lower primary school as a way to improve the position of employed women, however, did not provide significant results and did not resolve the conflict of roles. "These attempts have led to the integration of a traditional nuclear-patriarchal family by the socialist state."<sup>5</sup> Burdened with various roles and not able to pay for assistance, women had less leisure time than men. In order to fulfill all their obligations, they reduced their leisure time to a minimum. The extreme reduction of free time, in spite of the acquired rights and achieved freedoms, indicated again that men and women were treated unequally.

Parenting by women – raising and taking care of children – in families consisting of mothers who lived alone with their children had certain particularities. Both in times of socialism and nowadays, mothers who live alone with their children represent the majority of single-parent families. In Serbia, in 1953, the number of single-mother families amounted to 11% of all the families, whereas the number of single-father families was five times lower.<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the family structure of the Serbian population, single-mother families amounted to 11.4% of all the families (single-father families accounted for 3.3%) at the beginning of the 21st century.<sup>7</sup> If one takes into consideration only single-parent families in late 2014, 79% of single-parent families consisted of single mothers with children.<sup>8</sup>

These families were formed in various ways, above all by out-of-wedlock births or divorces. The destiny and life of women with children born out of wedlock varied. Some of these mothers lived in communities that were different from marriage only in that they were not officially registered, or these women married the fathers of their children later. Mothers who lived alone with illegitimate children were most often at a disadvantage, regardless of whether paternity was

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<sup>4</sup> Davor Topolčić: Muškarci to ne rade: rodno segregirana podjela rada u obitelji ["Men Don't Do That: Gender Segregation of Domestic Division of Labor"], In: *Social Researches*, Vol. 10, No. 4–5, October, (2001), p. 773.

<sup>5</sup> Ana Vilenica, *Postajanje majkom na periferiji, od socijalizma do neoliberalnog "tranzicijskog" režima materinstva ka radikalnim praksama brige [Becoming a Mother on the Periphery: From Socialism to a Neo-liberal "Transitional" Regime of Motherhood toward Radical Care Practices]*, Belgrade, 2014, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Žena u društvu i privredi Jugoslavije [Women in the Society and Economy of Yugoslavia]*, Statistical Bulletin 298, (Belgrade: Federal Institute for Statistics, 1964), p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> Jelena Predojević: *Domaćinstva i porodice [Households and Families]*. In: Goran Panev (ed.) *Population and Households of Serbia according to the 2002 Census*, (Belgrade, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Demographic Research Center of the Institute of Social Sciences, Association of Demographers of Serbia, 2006), p. 273.

<sup>8</sup> *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia* (Belgrade, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2014), p. 10.

recognized or not. Difficult economic and social life conditions were the reality for a lot of single mothers. They were often unemployed, did not have any qualifications or a place to live. In the early 1960s, the majority of single mothers with illegitimate children were housewives (more than 40%), workers (about 25%) mostly without qualifications, farmers (about 20%), etc. They finished only primary school and very often not even that.<sup>9</sup> Some research shows that until the end of the 20th century in Serbia the largest share of non-marital births was among women who did not finish school, whereas it was lowest among the most educated women with university degrees. As time went by, the percentage of children born out of wedlock by mothers with primary education or no qualifications at all decreased. On the other hand, the percentage of women with secondary education increased. At the same time, the percentage of highly educated mothers recorded a slight increase. However, the greatest number of out-of-wedlock births still takes place among uneducated women. Professional occupations of mothers with illegitimate children at the beginning of the 21st century also show that the majority of them were either unemployed or dependants. If employed, they most often did physical jobs (26.1%), and the smallest number of them belonged to the group of experts (7.8%).<sup>10</sup> Many single-parent families were exposed to great economic hardship and poverty. Lives of single mothers and their children were accompanied by poverty, so the life in the community with grandparents would often be the only solution. Single-parent families in modern conditions in Serbia often live within extended families. According to certain empirical research, every third single-parent family in Serbia lives within an extended family.<sup>11</sup> Joint life at the parents' home is typical for families of unmarried mothers. Families of unmarried mothers, particularly the ones with several children not acknowledged by their fathers, receive no alimony and are at the greatest risk of social exclusion.<sup>12</sup>

The attitude of environment and the position toward single-parent families composed of mothers with children in the socialist state – that is, their appreciation and acceptance – depended on the manner in which they were formed. They were usually created by out-of-wedlock birth, divorce, parent's death, or in some other

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<sup>9</sup> Historical Archives of Belgrade, Conference for the Social Activity of Women, box 5, 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Goran Panev, Biljana Stanković: Karakteristike vanbračnih rađanja u Srbiji u drugoj polovini 20. i početkom 21 veka [Characteristics of Out-of-wedlock Births in Serbia in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and Early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries]. In: *Population*, No. 2 (2010), pp. 12-14.

<sup>11</sup> Mina Petrović: Promene bračnosti i porodičnih modela u postsocijalističkim zemljama: zakasnela i nepotpuna ili specifična druga demografska tranzicija?, [Changes in Matrimony and Family Models in Post-socialist Countries: Belated and Incomplete or Another Specific Demographic Transition?]. In: *Population*, No. 1 (2011), p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> Smiljka Tomanović: Izlazak iz senke: Jednoroditeljske porodice u današnjoj Srbiji [Coming out of Shadows: Single-parent Families in Present-day Serbia]. In: Smiljka Tomanović, Milana Ljubičić, Dragan Stanojević: *Jednoroditeljske porodice u Srbiji- sociološka studija [Single-parent Families in Serbia – sociological study]*. Belgrade: "Čigoja Press," Institute for Sociological Research at the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade, 2014, p. 221.

way.<sup>13</sup> Traditionally, the most favorable attitude was toward women who stayed alone with children after their husband's death. Such families had better treatment compared to women who had illegitimate children and who almost always faced rejection and disapproval. This attitude on the part of the environment gradually changed. Different views were reflected in everyday practices in the socialist state. However, inconsistent attitudes toward non-marital partnership and unmarried mothers also existed among communists. The life of women with children born out of wedlock was often full of difficulties. Sometimes the attitude of party organizations toward such mothers was contrary to the ideology of gender egalitarianism and reflected the inferiority of women who experienced different treatment and social inequality between genders. "There is the case of a mother who was excluded from the Communist Youth due to an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, whereas the father, who was also a member of the Communist Youth or the Communist Party, did not suffer any consequences. Some courts refused to investigate paternity."<sup>14</sup> Such social practices continued in the years to come. Records from the 1950s show that parents acted in a very irresponsible way toward children born in common-law marriage, or after divorce, "even if they were communists." They avoided providing assistance in various ways or even denied the fact that they had a child. "Therefore, in some cases, children were not even registered in the Civil Registry. There are also cases of bigamy, even among communists and officers who deceived both party authorities and women into marrying them, while still being officially married to another woman in some other place and not even planning to divorce."<sup>15</sup> Such cases neither attracted public attention nor were they ever prosecuted. Public humiliation and disapproval of unmarried mothers was more typical for villages than for urban environments.

In the entire post-war period, child custody was most often awarded to the mothers in divorces, which differed from the time before the war. The focus of the state on the interest of under-aged children after divorce of a married couple was expressed, among other things, in the establishment of a legal obligation to provide alimony, which was not always successful. Spouses who were not granted the children after divorce tried in various ways to avoid giving alimony. Everyday life revealed discrimination against women and children of divorced parents, even when this was against the law. Surveys conducted in different periods, in certain companies and social work centers, show that a high percentage of divorced women did not receive alimony for their children. In the early 1960s, a research survey

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<sup>13</sup> Sadika Grozdanić: Jednoroditeljske obitelji prema uzrocima njihovog nastanka [Single-parent Families according to the Causes of their Occurrence]. In: *Social Work Chronicle*, 7 (2000–2001), No. 2, pp. 169–182.

<sup>14</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia, Women's Antifascist Front, 141, 33, Report on the State of Childcare in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, 1948.

<sup>15</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia, Office of the President of the Republic, II- 2/16, 11 September – 01 October 1953, box 39.



conducted by the Center for Social Work in Belgrade and involving about 200 children found that in most cases parents did not pay alimony to their children (in 65% of cases). The alimony was regularly paid by only 25% of parents, namely by every fourth parent. About 8% of the interviewed parents gave alimony from time to time, i.e. not on a regular basis. Only 3.5% of divorced parents reached an agreement about schooling, upbringing, taking care of children when they are ill and other issues related to children. Children rarely saw the parent with whom they did not live; almost every second parent (48%) never saw their child.<sup>16</sup> Other research conducted in the time of socialism showed a similar picture.

In the 1990s, during the civil war in Yugoslavia, the social, economic, and political crisis that fundamentally shook Serbia affected the family equally. The crisis that touched all spheres of social life, bringing chaos and despair, was accompanied by the abandonment of almost all values of the ethical code cherished until then. While it degraded the position of the majority of the population, it was the women who took up its full burden. The decline in production and employment, a multitude of people taking forced leave in a concurrently flourishing grey economy, and poverty brought to its extreme limits are only a part of the picture of the economic and social environment in Serbia in the last decade of the 20th century. Serbia in 1999 also was marked by migration, conflict, and bombing. Throughout this crisis, the practice of taking care of children that was typical for the socialist state deteriorated as part of the general social context. The social transition in the late 20th and early 21st centuries led to many changes. Research shows that these processes, among others, had a destabilizing effect on families and family relationships.

“The history of the democratic transition of the neoliberal regime of maternity in Serbia is the history of degradation of socialist heritage and medical care, workers’ rights, and withdrawal of the state from public services.”<sup>17</sup>

Parenting by women in Serbia, in the context of contemporary social changes, is marked by a high degree of mother’s engagement in all the activities related to the raising of children and their participation in such activities is mainly greater than father’s.

A child’s upbringing and numerous ensuing activities, ranging from those needed for the youngest children, such as nourishment, dressing, hygiene, etc., to additional assistance for children of school age regarding homework, studying, and other school activities, such as attending parent-teacher meetings, the time needed for children’s out-of-school activities, etc., rely to a large extent on mothers, regardless of the family form. Activities concerning small children, according to

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<sup>16</sup> Historical Archives of Belgrade, Conference for the Social Activity of Women, box 5, Some Problems of Children of Divorced Parents, 1962.

<sup>17</sup> Vilenica, *Becoming a Mother on the Periphery: From Socialism to a Neo-liberal “Transitional” Regime of Motherhood toward Radical Care Practices*, p. 11.

2007 data, are carried out by mothers in 75% of cases, by fathers in 9.2% of cases, and jointly in 15.7% of cases. Assistance and care in terms of school tasks is mainly provided by mothers (in 74.4% of cases), whereas this kind of activity is carried out by men in 15.3% of cases and jointly in 10.3% of cases. The percentage of women who are engaged in housework is even higher (85.4% cooking, 82.8% washing, 79% cleaning, 84.6% ironing).<sup>18</sup>

Other research also illustrates a very extensive engagement by mothers in their child's upbringing. According to statements of mothers and fathers on child-related tasks, accompanied by different estimates by men and women pertaining to their own engagement, it can be seen that the presence of mothers in all the tasks is dominant. However, there is an increasing number of activities that are carried out by parents in common, and in which they participate to an equal extent. According to assessments of people participating in a 2012 research project, parents participate jointly to a great extent in the following activities: playing with children, general child upbringing, and talking about problems.<sup>19</sup>

Even nowadays, general features of single-mother families in Serbia affect parenting by women in different ways and determine their everyday life. Contemporary sociological studies indicate that single-parent families are often in a worse financial position than two-parent families, having lower income per household member on average. The state of unmarried mothers is the most difficult as they are in a minority among the employed, and, even if they belong to this group, they have lower salaries and are more financially dependent compared to other parents. Educational structure of these mothers is less favorable compared to other mothers. Divorced parents are in a slightly more favorable financial position and are more similar to two-parent families in terms of income.<sup>20</sup>

Payment of alimony and problems stemming from parents' obligations after divorce or obligations toward mothers who live alone with their children have manifestations and characteristics nowadays very similar to those in times of socialism. The aforementioned sociological study shows that one half of divorced parents or two thirds of unmarried mothers do not receive alimony for child subsistence, according to an interviewed sample. Where there was an agreement or court decision regarding parental visitation of their child or children after a divorce, slightly less than one half of interviewed parents who were not appointed as child

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<sup>18</sup> Marija Babović: *Rodne ekonomske nejednakosti u komparativnoj perspektivi: Evropska unija i Srbija, [Gender Economic Inequalities in Comparative Perspective: European Union and Serbia]* (Belgrade: Sociological Association of Serbia and Montenegro, Institute for Sociological Research at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, SeConS – Development Initiative Group, 2010), p. 232.

<sup>19</sup> Marina Blagojević Hughson: *Rodni barometar u Srbiji: razvoj i svakodnevni život [Gender Barometer in Serbia: Development and Everyday Life]*, (Belgrade: United Nations Development Programme, 2013), p. 196.

<sup>20</sup> Dragan Stanojević: *Društveni položaj jednoroditeljskih porodica [Social Status of Single-parent Families]*. In: *Single-parent Families in Serbia – sociological study*, pp. 77, 83.

guardians (47.5%) did not see their child or children at all, while the remainder of them did, but only sporadically.

Fathers of children born out of wedlock who acknowledged paternity used to see their children on a regular basis in 42.2% of cases, less than one third of them sporadically, whereas one fourth of these fathers did not see their children at all. Parental responsibilities of single women who live with their children, and household work that is almost entirely based on them, complicates the possibility of harmonizing different roles and spheres of these women's lives. In single-parent families, women carry out all the tasks mainly on their own. If a woman with children lives at her parents' home, she shares household work with and receives assistance from her mother, mainly with regard to cooking, shopping, ironing, cleaning, etc.<sup>21</sup>

Research by the Ministry of Labor carried out in 2014 on a sample of 916 single parents indicates that the time that parents spend with their toddlers is equal to a total time both parents spend with a child in two-parent families, which accounts for 3.8 hours on average. In traditional families, according to this research, the said time is divided into two hours with mother and one hour with father. Also, the research shows that seven out of 10 single-parents receive support from their parents, either financial or in taking care of children.<sup>22</sup>

State support for parenting is manifested in various ways, including through the establishment of legal solutions and legal norms on maternity protection. The Labor Law stipulates that employed women have the right to paid maternity leave for a period of three months and to childcare leave for up to 365 days from the day of the beginning of maternity leave, while this right is prolonged to two years for the third and every following child. Law makers have enabled a child's father to use maternity leave in case a mother abandons her child, dies, or is unable to use maternity leave due to serious illness, prison sentence, etc. A child's father can use this right even in case a mother is not employed. He can also use the right to childcare leave. The law envisages special rights to expectant and breastfeeding mothers.<sup>23</sup>

State support is also provided through the establishment of parental allowance. Parental allowance is a population policy measure of the state and is provided for the first, second, third, and fourth child in the family to parents who enjoy the right to health protection through the National Health Insurance Fund. Except for the first child, in which case it is paid out on a one-time basis, it is otherwise divided into 24

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<sup>21</sup> Smiljka Tomanović: Svakodnevni kontekst roditeljstva [Everyday Context of Parenthood] In: *Single-parent Families in Serbia – sociological study*, pp. 103, 110.

<sup>22</sup> Katarina Đorđević: Svega trećina roditelja redovno plaća alimentaciju [Only One Third of Parents Pay Alimony Regularly]. In: *Politika* (Belgrade), 26 September 2014 at [www.politika.rs](http://www.politika.rs) (accessed on 4 November 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Labor Law, *Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* 24/2005, 61/2005, 54/2009, 32/2013 and 75/2014.

monthly instalments. The value of parental allowance increases depending on the number of children.<sup>24</sup>

Contrary to parental allowance, child allowance is reserved only for the poorest families. This right is realized via a parent, guardian, or sustainer who directly takes care of a child and it refers to the first four children in the family in which income per family member is lower than the established amount. The preconditions are that parents reside in Serbia, that they are Serbian citizens, and that they are insured by the National Health Insurance Fund. Children who have the right to child allowance must not be older than 19, and must regularly attend school in Serbia.<sup>25</sup>

The network of preschool institutions, nurseries, and kindergartens in Serbia is not large enough to accommodate all the children of age for those services. According to data for 2011, preschool institutions in Serbia covered 37% of children. The percentage of children in towns amounted to 47% and in rural environments to 15%.<sup>26</sup>

On September 30, 2014, a website of the Ministry of Education reported that, according to the latest data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF, 50.2% of children between the ages of 3 and 5 are covered by preschool education in Serbia (in rural environments 27%). Therefore, Serbia seriously lags behind the European Union member states, where the level of preschool participation of children stands at 87%. Children coming from poor families are rarely present in preschool institutions (9%).<sup>27</sup> In the capital only around 4,000 children are not able to attend public kindergartens.<sup>28</sup>

Despite laws that protect employed women's maternity, as well as some other forms of state support to parenting, insufficient kindergarten capacities, the lack of other institutions for assistance to employed mothers, usually high prices for childcare-related services are a precondition for potentially conflicting situations that women encounter while trying to harmonize professional work and maternity. Taking care of children and carrying out activities related to providing care, raising and upbringing children in Serbia is still largely based on mothers while sharp differences between men and women in terms of housekeeping performance still survive.

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<sup>24</sup> Mirjana Rašević: Populaciona politika u Republici Srbiji, stanje i očekivanja [Population Policy in the Republic of Serbia, Conditions and Expectations]. In: *Population*, No. 2 (2009), pp. 55, 56.

<sup>25</sup> *Deciji dodatak* [Child Allowance], <http://www.roditelj.org/korisni-linkovi/korisne-informacije/deciji-dodatak/> (accessed on 12. November 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Mira Lakićević: Socijalne reforme i socijalni razvoj Srbije [Social Reforms and Social Development in Serbia]. In: Drenka Vuković and Mihail Arandarenko (ed.): *Social Reforms—Content and Results*, (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, 2011), p.122.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/vesti/1535-vrtici-bez-granica> (accessed on 22 November 2014).

<sup>28</sup> *Telegraf* (Belgrade), 14 December 2014, in [www.telegraf.rs](http://www.telegraf.rs) (accessed on 15 December 2014).

## **Women and work**

Identity of the woman in socialism was formulated primarily through maternity and work. One of the central points of emancipation of the woman was the right to work, and employment of the woman was in line with the expected social roles that were intended for her. Employment of women was one of the very important segments of social life; the principle of equal pay for the same type of job was implemented in the normative regulation and tendency toward reduction of existing occupational differentiation into male and female were the official position. The employment rate of women in Serbia and Yugoslavia grew constantly, although there is documentation by the Women's Organisation and some other sources that indicate a discrepancy between the proclaimed policy of gender equality in the work market and actual practice; they were sometimes different. After a strong penetration of women into the economic life of the country immediately after World War II and in the period of reconstruction, in the early 1950s there was a decrease in the percentage of employed women in relation to the total number of employed people. As of the mid-1950s, the number of women who worked outside their homes was increasing, even though they always comprised the majority of the unemployed. Mass employment of women was present in spite of limitations that sometimes appeared in practice.<sup>29</sup>

Some examples of explicit or implicit discrimination in the recruitment process were preserved in the documentation of the Women's Organisation. According to certain documents, it was the practice not to employ pregnant women. It was written in the Women's Organisation reports that in the event of employee redundancy in a company, women were the first to be dismissed, as a rule, even the ones who had children. At the same time, men were in an advantageous position during employment.<sup>30</sup> In spite of such cases, women's participation in total employment grew consistently.

The principle of "equal pay for equal work" was respected in practice. However, men and women still had different incomes because, among other reasons, women usually did jobs that were not well-paid. Widespread employment of women was not followed by their increased representation in management positions.<sup>31</sup>

Feminization of numerous social activities was begun in socialism – in health care, education, and culture. Although women were in a majority in these fields, they were always at lower or middle levels of the business hierarchy. Decision-

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<sup>29</sup> Vera Gudac Dodić: *Između javnog i privatnog: Tito o svakodnevnici žena u socijalizmu* [Between Public and Private: Tito on Everyday Life of Women in Socialism]. In: Olga Manojlović Pintar (ed.): *Tito, Views and Interpretations* (Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Archives of Yugoslavia, 2011), p. 365.

<sup>30</sup> Historical Archives of Belgrade, Conference for the Social Activity of Women, box 2, 1952.

<sup>31</sup> Vera Gudac Dodić: *Žena u socijalizmu* [Woman in Socialism], (Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 2006), pp. 61–68.

making positions were mostly occupied by men. Feminization of certain activities contributed to a slow and later increasingly visible gap regarding salaries, equipment, and investment.<sup>32</sup> By comparing the employment of men and women in the late 1960s, it was observed that women with the same qualifications as men were more often employed in lower income groups than men.<sup>33</sup> Research related to the period between 1965 and 1980 in Yugoslavia showed that greater participation of women in certain economic activities was a definite indicator of lower income in those fields of economy.<sup>34</sup>

In the last decade of the 20th century, unfavorable economic conditions led to the exacerbation of the position of women (and men, as well) on the labor market. Social and economic changes taking place in the period of transition, which were intensified after 2000 – primarily privatisation and the transition to market economy – contributed to, among other things, a further increase in unemployment and high social insecurity. The “Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia,” published by the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2003, provided numerous indicators of the unfavorable position of women at that time. Among its findings, it was established that more than 40% of women older than 15 did not have regular personal income, compared to less than 30% of men. Women’s unemployment rate (26%) was higher than the unemployment rate of men (20%). Women’s income was around 15% lower than men’s on average. Women waited for a job longer and encountered more complex employment requirements than men. They encountered direct or indirect discrimination in professional advancement; they usually supported children after divorce; and older women had lower education and qualifications. Customs contributed to the inequality of women in terms of inheritance. Female employers (founders or co-founders of firms, shops) accounted for 30%; they were rarely present in ownership transformation and there was a significant difference between men and women in the amount of unpaid domestic work (4 to 5 hours).<sup>35</sup>

The trend of feminization of activities and professions that had begun in socialism continued, but it assumed new dimensions as well. Supremacy of women in many professions coincided not only with lower income from those professions, but

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<sup>32</sup> Dubravka Stajić: *Žene i svet rada u tranziciji* [Women and the World of Work in Transition]. In: Latinka Perović (ed.): *Serbia in Modernisation Processes of the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 2, (Belgrade: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, 1998), p. 229.

<sup>33</sup> Historical Archives of Belgrade, Conference for the Social Activity of Women, box 7, The Employment of Women and the Schooling of Female Youth, 31 March 1967.

<sup>34</sup> Željka Šporer: *Feminizacija profesija kao indikator položaja žene u različitim društvima*, [Feminisation of Professions as Indicator of the Position of Women in Different Societies]. In: *Sociology*, No. 3, Belgrade 1985, pp. 597–612.

<sup>35</sup> Mirjana Dokmanović: *Globalizacija i razvoj zasnovan na ljudskim pravima iz rodne perspektive* [Globalisation and Development based on Human Rights from Gender Perspective]. (Novi Sad: Institute for Gender Equality, 2012), pp. 121, 122.

also with a decrease in the status of those professions. As a result of crisis and privatization, once safe jobs related to these activities and services were brought into question.<sup>36</sup> The gender division in the job market reveals that women remain more numerous in professions that are less well paid – in the service sector, health care, social welfare, education, and – even there – they are dominant at lower educational levels. In Serbia, there is a difference in the structure of men and women's employment in sectors. Women most often work in the sector of services, accounting for 65% of the total female employment. Out of all employed women, 18.9% work in agriculture and 16.4% in industry. The percent of men employed in the sector of services is 45.1% – in industry 34.6% and in agriculture 20%.<sup>37</sup>

According to certain estimates for the period 2008–2011, the gender gap between men's and women's income per working hour in Serbia amounted to 3.3% in favor of men. However, the so-called rectified gender gap in income, which takes into consideration the educational profile of employed women and men, the level of education, occupation, work experience, in Serbia amounted to 11%, meaning that women with identical work performance as men had 11% lower income than men on average.<sup>38</sup>

According to the latest data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for March 2014, an unequal income, viewed through the prism of qualification level, is typical for almost all educational groups for men and women who work for legal entities. An average gross income for women is 60.185 RSD, whereas an average gross income for men is 68.026 RSD. A woman with a university degree has an average gross income of around 88.199 RSD, while a man with the same level of qualification receives 115.040 RSD. These sample differences in average income based on gender include neither an income provided by physical entities nor an average income per work hour.<sup>39</sup>

Women in Serbia are sometimes hindered in attempts to advance their professional career and they rarely occupy management positions. Among company directors in 2005, 20.8% were women; in 2009 the figure was 20.6%. The situation is similar for chairwomen of companies' managing boards where women accounted for 14.3%.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Nada G. Novaković: Žene i tržište rada u društvu u tranziciji [Women and Labor Market in a Society in Transition]. In: *Political Review*, Vol. 23 No.1 (2010), pp. 384, 385.

<sup>37</sup> Babović: *Gender Economic Inequalities in Comparative Perspective: European Union and Serbia*, p. 133.

<sup>38</sup> Sonja Avlijaš, Marko Vladislavljević: *Income Gap between Men and Women in Serbia*, Belgrade, 22 February 2013, [http://rs.one.un.org/organizations/18/GPG\\_final%20rezultati%20Srbija.pdf](http://rs.one.un.org/organizations/18/GPG_final%20rezultati%20Srbija.pdf) (accessed on 4 December 2014).

<sup>39</sup> *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Babović: *Gender Economic Inequalities in Comparative Perspective: European Union and Serbia*, p. 135.

Research into the position of women in the labor market in Serbia (2009) shows that there is a division into male and female professions, that women earn less than men, that not so many women occupy managing positions and well-paid jobs, and that they wait for a job longer than men. The unemployment rate of women is high. The position of marginalized groups of women, such as single mothers, older women, invalids, refugees, Roma women, and village women is especially hard. Regional differences play a significant role. Big towns, especially Belgrade, provide better chances of employment, so the unemployment rate of women there is lower. Women in Serbia are losers in the post-socialist transition, particularly if they are elderly, uneducated, live in village, or belong to marginal groups, says the research.<sup>41</sup>

The position of mothers in parenting points to the existence of unequal opportunities for economic independence between men and women. This position reduces the chance of economic independence of women because of the increased time that women spend on childcare and on other unpaid family activities. This does not apply to women who are not married. As in the time of socialism, women are taking a larger share of responsibility regarding both childcare and care for aging parents. This affects their participation in the labor market negatively. Family obligations often prevent women from holding the highest paid jobs. Highly positioned and well paid jobs most often require flexible working hours and additional activities after regular office hours. A majority of such jobs demand frequent travel and longer absence from home and therefore pose an obstacle to creating and maintaining balance between family and work obligations. "Therefore, the inherited inferiority of women continues in new transitional circumstances in Serbia as well."<sup>42</sup> Women often focus on jobs that do not require longer and frequent absence from home and additional working hours, that is, they focus on professional activities that can be harmonized with family obligations. However, the key obstacles to achieving economic independence in Serbia are high unemployment and poverty.

The female unemployment rate in Serbia is constantly higher than the male unemployment rate. According to data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for 2013, the unemployment rate of women who were age 15 years and older was 24%, which is three percent higher than the unemployment rate of men (21%). The highest unemployment rate was registered for women between the ages of 15

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<sup>41</sup> Marija Kolin: *Rodne nejednakosti na tržištu rada u Srbiji i podsticaji evropskih integracija* [Gender Inequalities in the Labor Market in Serbia and Incentives to European Integration]. (Beograd: European Movement in Serbia, 2009), p. 8. [www.emins.org/sr/publikacije/knjige/10-Rodne-nejednakosti-na-trzistu-rada-u-Srbiji.pdf](http://www.emins.org/sr/publikacije/knjige/10-Rodne-nejednakosti-na-trzistu-rada-u-Srbiji.pdf) (accessed on 6 December 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Marija Kolin, Ljiljana Čičkarić: *Rodne nejednakosti u zapošljavanju, upravljanju i odlučivanju* ["Gender Inequalities in Employment, Management and Decision Making"]. In: *Population*, No. 1 (2010), p. 120.



and 24 years, 57%, while the unemployment rate for men of the same age was 45%.<sup>43</sup>

Women are encountering different kinds of discrimination in the labor market today, regarding not only the employment process but also at the work place. The most common type of employment discrimination occurs during the selection procedure. In job interviews, female candidates are asked about their private life, marital status, whether they have children, whether they plan to get married and have children, even though such questions are forbidden in accordance with the Labor Law. This refers especially to younger women without children. Male candidates are usually not asked such questions. Discrimination connected with pregnancy and maternity is especially important as an obstacle for getting a job. Sometimes employers refuse to employ women if they consider that certain workplaces are more suitable for men.<sup>44</sup>

Research on the position of women carried out in 2014 showed that in spite of the fact that men and women in Serbia formally have equal rights, the social and economic status of women is less favorable. The basic and common conclusion of a series of research projects conducted by the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran, and Social Policy is that there is a huge gap between proclaimed principles and practices regarding the implementation of policies. A majority of interviewed women covered by the research, 66%, stated that gender equality does not exist. The same position was held by 44% of interviewed men. A majority of men still believes that equality between men and women in Serbia exists (55%), whereas women with such an opinion are in a minority (33%). Highly educated women coming from urban environments and with higher income have more positive opinion about gender equality in Serbia. The overwhelming majority of interviewed persons think that a woman's professional career is more often at risk due to family obligations. Traditional roles in the family and a considerably greater portion of responsibilities and obligations taken over by women under the auspices of the family result in a number of women having less room for further professional affirmation and promotion after entering into marriage. It is interesting that as much as 38% of the population covered by this research stated that more frequently in Central Serbia and rarely in Belgrade there were examples of women who were dismissed due to maternity leave. Explicit is the gap that appears between men and women in the business sector. Furthermore, one fourth of the positions of managing director and administrative board president are occupied by women. For every 100 employed men with university degrees there are 114 women and, according to this research, an average income within this category differs by 5.1% in favor of men.

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<sup>43</sup> *Women and Men in the Republic of Serbia*, p. 71.

<sup>44</sup> Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, Sanja Čopić, Jasmina Nikolić, Bejan Šaćiri: *Diskriminacija žena na tržištu rada u Srbiji* [Discrimination of Women in the Labor Market in Serbia]. (Belgrade: Victimology Society of Serbia; Prometej; 2012), pp. 125, 126.

Women account for one third of entrepreneurs in Serbia (31.7%); they most often assume this role out of necessity (66%) and they usually do not have a family tradition in this field.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

In the time of socialism, a great step forward was made in terms of alleviating the existing gender inequality, particularly relating to married women, which was present until the end of the Second World War, even in laws in Serbia. The formal and legal equality of women, accompanied by a series of laws that made the position of men and women equal, and by significant emancipatory progress realized in the socialist state, primarily in the fields of women's education and employment, was not reached in the private sphere. Unequal participation of women in domestic work and so-called parental time, as well as the conflict of roles of working women, wives, and mothers, was a constant feature of the position of women in Serbia. Various research confirms that even today the high level of a mother's engagement in all activities related to raising children – which is greater than the father's level of childcare engagement – survives alongside the mother's other traditional roles within the family. The reintroduction of patriarchy and traditionalism in family relations, however, has not come as a consequence of environmental changes that appeared in the time of transition, but from influences of patriarchal heritage.<sup>46</sup> In the time of the post-socialist transition, the position of women in the labor market was unfavorable, the evidence of which is a series of indicators presented in the text. Certain fields have lately seen the partial reaffirmation of women, for example, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has 250 MPs, of whom 86 or 34.4% are women.<sup>47</sup> In some spheres of life, gender differences have been lost (education and schooling), and in the others they are still very clear. At the same time, a lot of democratic institutions were established and some laws that had not been common in the social practice in Serbia before that time were passed. Examples include the introduction of a separate article of the Criminal Code addressing family violence (2002), the Law on Gender Equality, and some other laws. Since women and children are most often the victims in incidents of domestic violence, the changes in this field are very important for their protection. However, the position of women in Serbia is less favorable than the position of men in many segments.

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<sup>45</sup> Položaj žene u Srbiji-činjenice koje demantuju stavove [Position of Women in Serbia – Facts that Deny titudes], Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Issues, [http://www.mc.rs/upload/documents/saopstenja\\_izvestaji/2014/09-25-14-Ministarstvo-za-rad.pdf](http://www.mc.rs/upload/documents/saopstenja_izvestaji/2014/09-25-14-Ministarstvo-za-rad.pdf) (accessed on 9 Decembar 2014).

<sup>46</sup> Blagojević Hughso., *Gender Barometer in Serbia: Development and Everyday Life*, p. 259.

<sup>47</sup> Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, Polna struktura [National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, Gender structure], <http://www.parlament.gov.rs> (accessed on 30 Decembar 2014)



# **Women under international protection in Bosnia-Herzegovina (status, perspective)**

Marijana Dinek and Diana Ridić

In many societies, women and girls face specific risks and are less likely than men and boys to have access to their rights, due to their gender roles and position in society. In situations of displacement, these risks – particularly discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence – can be exacerbated. Community support structures break down and traditional or formal justice systems may not uphold women's rights. Unaccompanied women and girls, women heads of households and pregnant, disabled, or older women may face particular challenges. (UN High Commissioner for Refugees).<sup>1</sup>

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a post-communist society in transition toward European integration. The legacy of the socialist society with traditional norms and a high degree of gender equality in education, employment, politics, and participation in public life briefly describes the Bosnian society today from the perspective of gender equality.

Due to the expansion of the European Union and the establishment of the Schengen area, BiH has become a door of entry to the EU and the country is particularly challenged by the arrival of migrants, especially of women from third-world countries.

## **Gender, age, and nationality of asylum seekers in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile (hereinafter: BiH Migration Profile) is a response to the need to establish a mechanism for gathering statistical data on migration and international protection, a system for processing migration statistics, and a system for timely and adequate reporting on migration flows in BiH.<sup>2</sup> According to the BiH Migration Profile of 2013, 88 applications for international protection were filed by or on behalf of 119 people, although that figure also includes transferred pending applications from 2012.

The BiH Migration Profile 2013 specifies these asylum seekers as follows: Taking into account unresolved applications from the previous years, as well as new

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<sup>1</sup> *Particular Challenges and Risks*, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d9.html> (accessed on 5 February 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile for the year 2013; [https://www.gfmd.org/files/pfp/.../MIGRATION\\_PROFILE\\_2013\\_ENG](https://www.gfmd.org/files/pfp/.../MIGRATION_PROFILE_2013_ENG)

applications from 2013, which amounts to 88 applications for 119 persons, most applications were submitted by nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (48.86% of the total number of asylum seekers), as a result of the war in this country. Here are the figures concerning the gender and age structure of the 119 persons referenced in the 88 applications. There were 34 women (28.57%) and 85 men (71.43%) among these applications. The age structure of these individuals shows that in most cases they are between 18 and 35 years old (65 persons or 54.62% of all asylum seekers), followed by the group of persons who are between 0 and 17 years of age (30 persons or 25.21%), followed by those who are between 36 and 59 years of age (19 persons or 15.97%), and finally those aged over 60 years (5 persons or 4.20%).

If we consider applications for international protection received in 2013 (73 applications for 100 persons), it is evident that most of them were submitted by nationals of the Syrian Arab Republic (59%). The sex and age structure of new applications made in 2013 shows that among the applicants there were 27 women (27%) and 73 men (73%). The dominant age group was that of 18 to 35 (55 persons or 55%), followed by the age group of 0 to 17 (27 persons or 27%), followed by the age group of 36 to 59 (14 persons or 14%), and finally the over 60 age group (4 persons or 4%).<sup>3</sup> (p. 63)

The gender statistics were not recorded for the different age groups. The absence of age-specific data can cause problems when planning assistance and creating programs for this group of beneficiaries.

### **Female refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Women refugees are especially at risk because they are vulnerable in many ways including as victims of violence, as single mothers, heads of households, and persons with disabilities, among other risk factors.

Refugee women in BiH come from more than 13 countries, mostly from the Asian continent (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Sri Lanka), the African continent (Ethiopia, Somalia, Cameroon, Nigeria, Eritrea), as well as from the countries of former Yugoslavia (Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia).

It is important to bear in mind the impact of the migration process on the mental health of women under international protection. Various studies<sup>4</sup> underline the negative impact of forced migration, stating, for example, that people who forcibly migrated are more likely than others to develop psychological problems in the fu-

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from: *Bosnia and Herzegovina Migration Profile for the year 2013*; [https://www.gfmd.org/files/pfp/.../MIGRATION\\_PROFILE\\_2013\\_ENG](https://www.gfmd.org/files/pfp/.../MIGRATION_PROFILE_2013_ENG); P. 63.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Maria Kristiansen: *Health effects of migration*; available at: [http://www.danmedbul.dk/DMB\\_2007/0107/0107-artikler/DMB3871.pdf](http://www.danmedbul.dk/DMB_2007/0107/0107-artikler/DMB3871.pdf); and World Health Organisation (WHO) *Health of migrants*; Report by the Secretariat, April 2008 available at: [http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/A61/A61\\_12-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/A61/A61_12-en.pdf)

ture. The most common mental health problem of migrants is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), often characterized by depression and anxiety. People suffering from PTSD need special care. They are more vulnerable and are more dependent on representatives of local aid institutions, particularly in the health and social sectors.<sup>5</sup> Their access to health care and social services is extremely important. Proper connections must be established between refugees and social services and mentoring should be provided.

The BiH Women's Initiative (BHWI) Foundation, a partner organization of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), provides direct assistance to more than 300 people per year; all of them persons under international protection in BiH. They include refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, stateless persons, and persons who returned to BiH through the readmission process. Of their number, 146 are women and girls; 68 are adults. The female migrants left their countries in response to well-founded fear of persecution for various reasons including war, traditional norms and customs that victimize women and girls in various ways including early and forced marriages, genital mutilation, denial of the right to education, forced labor, prostitution, and discrimination based on race, nationality, or religion.

### **Specific risk group: stateless women**

Among women and girls under international protection, stateless persons are especially vulnerable. This category may include Roma women and other women without documents who are potential victims or survivors of human trafficking. They are often looked on as outsiders, even though they share all the rights of BiH citizens (except voting). For them it is very difficult to exercise their fundamental rights such as the right of protection and security, employment, education, and medical treatment. Therefore, stateless women, mostly Roma nationals without documents and health care protection, use the documents and health insurance of other women in order to give birth in a hospital. This has far-reaching negative implications. A biological mother, for example, needs to register her child at the Birth Registry in order to obtain a birth certificate for her child. The certificate is required for the child's later enrolment in school. Since the stateless mother gave birth under a false name, she must prove her motherhood. Many Roma women are reluctant to start the process since most of them do not live in the municipality or even in the country of their birth. Non-governmental organizations in BiH provide legal aid to help these women obtain documents and register their children's birth.

The process of proving motherhood is very expensive because it requires DNA analysis. Its cost puts it beyond the financial capability of this very poor population. As a consequence, DNA analysis is rarely carried out. Because of the Romas' gen-

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<sup>5</sup> Fatahi Nabi; The Impact of the Migration on Psychosocial Well-Being: A Study of Kurdish Refugees in Resettlement Country. *J Community in Community Medicine & Health Education* Vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2014).

eral lack of interest in education, especially the education of girls, abandoning the education of children in such situations is a simpler and cheaper choice for them. Those children, without any documents, are at risk of various forms of violence.

Another key problem is that stateless women and girls predominantly do not speak the language of their host country and/or they are illiterate. Therefore, they are exposed to a greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking, of sexual, economic, and other forms of exploitation and violence in their host country. Unscrupulous persons frequently recruit such women into forced labor or prostitution, taking advantage of the women's fear and their ignorance of available support.

### **Human trafficking**

Stateless women run the risk of seeking help exactly from human traffickers in order to avoid the deportation as "illegal immigrants" or "just for being women," and therefore they "play it safe". The Office for Combating Human Trafficking within the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with local women's NGOs, offer different types of assistance to women victims of trafficking: (reception, accommodation in a safe house, psychosocial support, legal assistance, relocating to other countries where they will be safe, protection by the local security forces, etc.).<sup>6</sup> The BHWI Foundation is also active in this field with special psychosocial and economic empowerment programs to support women and girls refugees and aiming at preventing trafficking as well as finding durable solutions for women and girls who have been victims of human trafficking. With a special model of psychological assistance the BHWI Foundation wants to enable them to live independently in the future. The Foundation encourages the development of existing and of acquiring new skills and knowledge that will increase the chances for an easier access to the labour market, to self-employment, to employment and to economic security, to restore their self-confidence and to use their right to a decent life.

### **Refugees from war**

Deep traumatic experiences of refugee families who had to leave their home-country because of war present a serious obstacle for inclusion and for reaching the level of normal life, for security and for an "independent living." Mental health protection and psychosocial support are integral part of humanitarian aid. Refugees with a regulated status in the country can use their rights to receive mental health protection and psycho-social support from public institutions. If persons from this

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<sup>6</sup> See: *Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers: Strategy to counter trafficking in human beings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Action Plan 2013-2015*; available at: [www.legislationline.org/documents/id/18684](http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/18684).

category, due to their unregulated status, are not eligible for state support, they may ask for other types of assistance: e.g. BHWI Foundation provides direct psycho-social support to women and girls in overcoming trauma and finding ways to deal with the unpredictability of life in the challenging environment of a refugee and to build a new life. The BHWI Foundation, in cooperation with many experts in this field, independently created and implemented projects of psycho-social support to these persons. The whole process of assistance is based on the following principles: human rights and justice; participation; empowerment of persons on the available resources and capacities; an integrated and multi-layered system of support; approach to beneficiaries based on community mobilization, protection at the community level; mental health protection and psycho-social support; psychological first aid and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Work with this extremely sensitive category of women who are discriminated and stigmatized, and who (sometimes, because of the fear of stigma) even hide their refugee status at the cost of not being able to access their rights (e.g. priority to enroll a child in a nursery), raises many questions which can be classified into two bigger groups:

#### 1. Lack of material conditions for the reception

BiH itself is inter alia challenged by poverty, a high level of unemployment, and by widespread corruption. Thus, the country is not able to provide the assistance to migrants like EU member states do. This directly affects the quality of reception and the ability to meet the needs of migrants. For migrant women, this may result in prolonged frustration and may reduce their ability to normalize their situation and to re-engage in everyday life. Problems in this area are diverse and would certainly require a separate analysis. Experiences and observations made in our practical work emphasize the lack of special programs for work/employment of stateless women. Even though stateless women are de jure recognized as being equal to the BiH citizens and to men, they are de facto not. Such an attitude, besides the economic consequences for those women, also has psycho-social consequences in terms of recovery from severe traumas and of the creation of new traumas. It is furthermore important to point out the effects of “social and professional regression,” i.e. the possible impact of a new environment on the individual. The implications of “social and professional regression” also depend on the scale of imbalance between their own individual professional skills on the one side and the effective availability of jobs in the market on the other. It addition, whether the individual is able to comply with the requirements of the offered job is an important factor. In order to prevent the harmful effects of the above-mentioned psychological phenomena, it is necessary to provide additional social support to refugees during the process of adaptation to conditions in the host country.



2. Knowledge of migration – this group of problems can be divided into:

a) Insufficient and inadequate training programs for professionals in relevant institutions (e.g. judges, lawyers) who decide the fate of migrant women at all stages of their migrant life – from acceptance to the final decisions. This, in practice, results in a lack of integration programs that take into account a specific gender perspective, cultural and traditional norms of the migrants, prejudices and stereotypes in the host country, the effects of repeated victimization of immigrants, and finally the fear among women migrants of having to return to their country of origin and of re-prosecution in the country of origin. Due to inadequate knowledge and insufficient programs addressing specific needs, the mental state of migrants often worsens and their recovery seems almost impossible. As a consequence, they are becoming even more dependent on external support, which further complicates the above-mentioned set of problems.

b) Lack of research on women migration – on exile, trauma, and healing – in BiH and our region from the 1990s, which remains unrecognized by both EU and local researchers. A deficiency of serious research institutions and of research funds in BiH contribute to the problem. As a result, we do not really know about the real needs of migrant women and of ways to respond to those needs. The lack of research has led to a situation in which only foreign organizations (IOM, UNHCR) within their mandates are able to be closely involved in collecting data, in developing statistics, and creating support. Such support as is provided focuses mainly on psychosocial aspects and, therefore, only partly addresses the problems and is insufficient for migrants.

c) Lack of information about the impact of a transition society on migration has numerous consequences: a non-sensitized system towards migrant workers, lack of programs, prejudices and stereotypes, racism, sexism, trivialization of the problem (reference to a small number of migrants as an excuse), which can lead to a multiple victimization of refugees.

d) Lack of knowledge about cultures and traditions outside BiH and the region, which increases the chances for the spread of prejudices and stereotypes and creates an insecure atmosphere in the host country. This is particularly evident for local media reporting or not reporting on migrants, indicating that the problem of migrants (the stories about migrants) is not seen as an important or interesting topic. Public opinion, in turn, is not informed and influenced in ways that help to end stigmatization and to pave the way for tolerance vis-à-vis migration.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The importance of migration issues in BiH, a country in transition towards integration into the European Union can best be presented by the actual Data Migration Profile of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to which a total of 100 persons sought international protection in 2013. One category of migrants that is at a particular risk are women refugees who face multiple vulnerabilities: victims of violence, single mothers, bearers of households, persons with special needs. Women refugees in BiH come from more than 13 countries. In the group of women and girls under international protection, especially vulnerable categories are stateless persons (Roma and other women without documents), and potential victims and survivors of human trafficking. These women are extremely vulnerable. They are often seen as outsiders, which, despite the fact that they have equal rights with other citizens in BiH (except for voting), often have great difficulty accessing and claiming their fundamental rights, including as the right of protection and security, of employment, education, and medical treatment. Deep traumatic experiences among refugee families present a serious obstacle for inclusion and returning to a level of normal life. Therefore, these people are in need of every protection, mental health, and psycho-social support.

The BHWI Foundation has developed a model of psychosocial assistance that could enable them to live independently in the new environment: the development of existing skills and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that will increase their chances for access to the labor market, self-employment, employment and economic security, restore confidence and exercise the right to a decent life. Work with this category of beneficiaries opens up many questions that could be classified into two larger groups: lack of material conditions for reception and lack of knowledge about migrations.

Recommendations from practice and long standing experience of work with this specific part of our population aiming at the creation of adequate conditions for the reception and integration of women under international protection are the following:

- Women migrants must have a place in all programs for women from the local to the national level. It is necessary to incorporate the issue of women migrants into programs, strategies, action plans, and reports from the local to the national level and to conduct monitoring through governmental gender monitoring mechanisms of governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- Women migrants need to be involved in women's groups and networks in BiH, countries of origin, and in Europe; they need to speak up about their issues and advocate for equal rights with other women.

- It is necessary to encourage young researchers to investigate migration issues from a gender perspective by providing them with various means (e.g. grants, incentives).
- We recommend the development of programs for employment and emphasize the importance of income for women who need employment in terms of trauma healing, prevention of human trafficking and all forms of exploitation (cost-benefit).
- There is the need to work on gender sensitization by providing training for officers from institutions working on migration issues as well as other relevant institutions (police, courts, hospitals, social welfare centers, schools, employment agencies, etc.)
- Media should be encouraged to educate themselves on migration generally, and particularly from a gender perspective, and influence the creation of public opinion through presentation of positive information.
- Finally, we recommend incorporating the specific issue of women migrants into programs, strategies, action plans, reports from local to national level, and monitoring through gender-monitoring mechanisms by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

# Work and Family in Serbia: The Semiperipheral Gender Perspective<sup>1</sup>

Marina Hughson

## Introduction

This paper presents some of the findings of a complex research project: *Gender Barometer in Serbia: Development and Everyday Life*, which was conducted in Serbia in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The first part contains a theoretical framework related to gender regimes at the semiperiphery. In the second part, an overview is provided of some of the major results of a survey related to work and family, as well as some parts of the discourse analysis connected to employment issues. In the third part, the findings linked specifically to the economy of care are briefly presented. Finally, in the conclusion, generalizations based on the research are formulated and discussed from the perspective of the semiperipheral theoretical approach.

## Semiperipheral perspective: understanding the patterns

The most relevant characteristic of the semiperiphery of Europe, where Serbia, as well as other post-Yugoslav countries find themselves, is that it is shaped not only by its positional relationship, but also by its structural, relationship with its center, which is one of dependence, imitation, resistance, and transfer. The semiperiphery cannot be understood simply from a post-colonial theoretical approach, and not only because of the innovative strategies of neocolonialism through sweeping privatizations and financial manipulations<sup>3</sup> (Klein, 2007; Horvat and Štiks, 2012), but also because it is the subject of its own colonization; it is subjected to the

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of my project related to Social Inclusion, which I conduct within the Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade (financed by the Ministry for Education, Science, and Technological Development of Serbia, project No 47011). I would also like to acknowledge Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft/Southeast Europe Association (Munich) for organizing a conference and enabling this publication.

<sup>2</sup> Blagojević Hughson, Marina (2013): *Rodni barometar u Srbiji: razvoj i svakidašnji život*, Beograd: UN Women.

<sup>3</sup> Klein, Naomi (2007): *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Penguin Books; Horvat, Srećko, and Igor Štiks (2012): Dobrodošli u pustinju tranzicije: postsocijalizam, Evropska Unija i nova levica na Blakanu. In: Jadžić, Miloš; Maljković, Dušan and Veselinović, Ana. (eds.) *Kriza, odgovori, levica: prilozi za jedan kritički diskurs*, 159–76. Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

process of “self-colonization”<sup>4</sup> (Kovačević, 2008). Different trajectories of modernization also imply that differences between the core and the semiperiphery or periphery are not simply quantitative, but also qualitative (some differences can be quantified). In developmental terms, being previously industrialized to a large degree and then largely de-industrialized during the “transition” makes the semiperiphery a quite different social setting from the periphery and its developmental path. Although this may seem to be an overwhelming generalization, the fact is that there are huge differences, for example, between structural poverty in the third-world countries and the process of impoverishment in the second world during the transition.

One of the major structural characteristics of the semiperiphery is that it is constructed, both from within and outside, as an entity that is “lagging behind” and “catching up” with the core<sup>5</sup> (Blagojević 2009, 2013). Catching up, as a deliberate political and developmental choice of the countries at the semiperiphery, profoundly shaped their gender orders. For the goal of catching up to be achieved, women’s resources were extensively and intensively used both in private and public spheres. In that light, egalitarian ideology during socialism could be seen as highly instrumental for high mobilization of women’s resources. This is the background for explaining high education and employment levels, as well as early voting rights for women in Eastern Europe. In some post-socialist countries at the European semiperiphery, contrary to the general misconceptions and prejudices about the “backward women from the East,” voting rights were granted quite early: in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in 1918, in Czechoslovakia in 1920, Romania in 1929, Bulgaria in 1937<sup>6</sup> (Enwise Report, 2003: 23).

Another key characteristic of the (contemporary) semiperiphery is a process of “de-development” which is qualitatively different from the lack or absence of development, or slow pace of development. Transition for the second world, former industrialized communist countries in Europe, in many ways took a form of de-development. De-development is a deep structural change that, in economic terms, is related to depreciation of human, institutional, and infrastructural capital<sup>7</sup> (Moors and Ranasinghe 2003), but also has its profound social side effects. That process could be well understood from the perspective of global change, in the code of

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<sup>4</sup> Kovačević, Nataša (2008): *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourse and Europe’s Borderline Civilization*. London: Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Blagojević, Marina (2009): *Knowledge Production at the Semiperiphery: A Gender Perspective*. Beograd: IKSJ. Blagojević, Marina (2013): *Transnationalization and its Absence: The Balkan Semiperipheral Perspective on Masculinities*, In: Hearn, Jeff., Blagojević, Marina and Harrison, Katherine (eds.): *Transnational Men: Beyond, Between and Within the Nations*, NY: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Enwise Report: *Waste of Talents: turning private issues into a public debate* (2003), European Commission [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women/enwise/events\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women/enwise/events_en.html).

<sup>7</sup> Meurs, Mieke and Rasika Ranasinghe (2003): *De-development in Post-Socialism: Conceptual and Measurement Issues, Politics and Society*.

neoliberal paradigm<sup>8</sup> (Klein, 2007). In social terms, the de-development is related to many negative and anti-social consequences, such as increased social insecurity, decreased social protection and stability, institutional destruction, anomie, increased crime and violence, population crises, increased mortality, and even “barbarization” through the violent conflicts<sup>9</sup> (Blagojević 2009). De-development is not a simple regress, since it is not a simple going backward along the same line, but instead it is a distancing from the genuine developmental path, in terms of modernization and creation of some kind of structureless, chaotic, anomic social environment, which is more pronounced on the bottom (micro level), than on the top (macro – nation state and global levels). De-development, being related to depreciation of capital (human, infrastructural, institutional, and environmental resources), also represents a major obstacle for further development, or going back on track. That led to the phenomena of “surplus of humans,” surplus of both women and men, especially of those belonging to the fast-growing underclass (uneducated, rural, old, or even urban, educated but unemployed labor force). Surplus of human phenomena is not expressed only in high, permanent, structural unemployment, but also in an obvious erosion of labors’ rights, as well as the shrinking of the middle class, at the semi-periphery. It is also closely connected to “informalization of the labor market”<sup>10</sup> (Young 2005), being a permanent and not temporary condition for neoliberal globalization. “Surplus-ness” of both women and men in a condition of neoliberal globalization is what shapes their life chances, social positioning, and their identities.

However, besides similarities in the positions of women and men due to the surplus of humans, there are two very distinctive features of gender regimes at the semiperiphery. The first one is the existence of “self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy”<sup>11</sup> (Blagojević 1995; 2013). The second is the existence of “masculinity crises”<sup>12</sup> (Blagojević 2009; Somach 2011). The two are closely linked, thus producing a combination of high-level exploitation of women’s resources, on one hand, and strong patriarchal ideologies, with pronounced misogyny, which fabricate “domestication” and pacification of women, and thus enable that exploitation. In

<sup>8</sup> Klein, Naomi (2007:) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*.

<sup>9</sup> Blagojević, Marina. (2009) *Knowledge Production at the Semiperiphery: A Gender Perspective*. Beograd: IKSI.

<sup>10</sup> Young, Brigitte (2005): Globalization and Shifting Gender Governance Order(s). *Journal of Social Science Education*, (2).

<sup>11</sup> Blagojević, Marina (1995): Svakodnevnica iz ženske perspektive: Samožrtvovanje i beg u privatnost. In: Bolčić, Silvano (ur.): *Društvene promene i svakodnevnica: Srbija početkom 90-ih*, Beograd: ISIFF. Blagojević Hjuson, Marina (2013): *Rodni barometar u Srbiji: razvoj i svakidašnji život*, Beograd: UN WOMEN.

<sup>12</sup> Blagojević, Marina (2009): *Knowledge Production at the Semiperiphery: A Gender Perspective*. Beograd: IKSI. Somach, S. (2011): *Other Side of the Gender Equation: Gender Issues for Men in the Europe and Eurasia Region*, USAID Report.

fact, the stronger the dependence on women's resources in public and in private domains, the stronger the ideological "patriarchalism" to counterbalance it. The combination of the two often seems to be paradoxical and, therefore, often stays invisible to the Western eye in theory, research, and policy making. The result is, from the Western point of view, a strange amalgam of a "super woman," strong, powerful, but at the same time, sacrificial woman, who is "more than equal"<sup>13</sup> ("Polish mother," for example, more in: Marody and Giza-Poleszczuk 2000). Masculinity crises, on the other hand, are a result of the dependent position of men in a model of self-sacrificing matriarchy, in combination with actual "male identity crises," since identity cannot be organized around a nonexistent "male bread winner" model, due to the surplus of humans, high structural unemployment, and dependence on women's resources. At the same time, "re-traditionalization" and re-patriarchalization, as parts of an overall change of the value system in transitional countries<sup>14</sup> (Milić 2010) additionally put a burden on men to comply with their role as breadwinners, a role that during socialism was largely cancelled due to the prevailing dual-earner model of family organization. On the other hand, the self-sacrificing-micro-matriarchy model is a solid basis for the creation of women's identity, and women actively participate in this model, experiencing high emotional rewards and strengthened subjectivities. At the same time, women actively participate in misogynous discourses and practices, often deeply internalizing them<sup>15</sup> (Blagojević 2000) and acting negatively toward other women.

### **Gender Barometer 2012 in Serbia: Survey Results**

The Gender Barometer Survey was first conducted in Serbia in 2006, as the first survey offering a complex analysis of everyday life from a gender perspective.<sup>16</sup> The survey from 2012 went a step further than previous Gender Barometers in the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003, Montenegro in 2008 and Serbia in 2006), with the intention to pave the way for a new kind of understanding and consensus that could be described as a post-materialist, post-conflict, post-industrial, post-neoliberal vision of harmonizing relations between men and women. The starting point for this vision is the notion that men and women are equally engendered, that

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<sup>13</sup> Marody, Mirosława & Giza-Poleszczuk, Anna (2000): Changing Images of Identity in Poland: From the Self-Sacrificing to the Self-Investing Woman? In: Gal, Susan & Kligman, Gail (eds.): *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics and Everyday Life after Socialism (151-175)* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Milić, Andjelka, et al. (2010): *Vreme porodica. Sociološka studija o porodičnoj transformaciji u savremenoj Srbiji*, Beograd: ISI FF i Čigoja Štampa.

<sup>15</sup> Blagojević, Marina (ed.): *Mapiranje mizoginije u Srbiji, diskursi i prakse (Mapping Misogyny in Serbia: Discourses and Practices)*, Beograd: AZIN.

<sup>16</sup> Blagojević Hjuson, Marina (2013): *Rodni barometar u Srbiji: razvoj i svakidašnji život*, Beograd: UN Women ([http://www.awin.org.rs/sites/default/files/RODNI\\_BAROMETAR\\_2006](http://www.awin.org.rs/sites/default/files/RODNI_BAROMETAR_2006)).

their *de-gendering* – or stripping of gender and gender construction – is a condition of their personal integrity and the establishment of a harmonious relationship with (other) men and (other) women, i.e. with people in general and with nature, both within and around them. Gender needs to be simultaneously recognized and acknowledged, while also deconstructed and overcome. In Serbia, it is still very important to demonstrate that gender matters, but it is also important to understand that gender, just like other social identities, is itself a limitation that inhibits the expression of individual differences and capabilities.

This survey has been based on quantitative and qualitative methodologies, which complemented each other: 1. The quantitative survey covered various aspects of everyday life; 2. Qualitative methods used included focus groups (22), interviews (32), participant observation, personal records. The survey was based on a representative sample of the population aged between 20 and 50, which allowed for comparisons with the data from 2006. This sample provided an insight into the lifestyle of the part of the population that not only is the most active and affected by public policy, but is, at the same time, most likely to influence development. On the other hand, qualitative sources served to provide additional insight into the parts of the population and areas not covered by the survey. While the survey primarily provided a snapshot of the situation, the qualitative part was more focused on the search for “vantage points” that allowed for acceleration of transformation of everyday life and society as a whole, in the direction of achieving greater equality and greater gender inclusion in both private and public spheres of life. Find below some of the major survey findings related to work and family.

### Family

- In comparison to men, women aged 20-50 are more likely to live out of wedlock, are more often married with no children, and more often married with children. Men aged 20-50 are more likely than women to start an independent life, but also to stay with their parents, and are less likely to raise their children alone and to live in cohabitations. Differences between men and women are particularly prominent among single-parent families (single parents). The share of women who live in this type of family is seven times greater than that of men. The probability that a woman in Serbia aged 40-50 is a single parent with one or more children is as much as 30 times greater than for a man of that age group!
- Compared with 2006, there have been significant shifts in the family status of the respondents. The share of both men and women who are married and have children is now significantly smaller than before. In 2006, 51% of women and 42% of men had this status, while in 2012 these percentages were 42% for women and 39% for men. Broken down by age, it can be noted that only 45% of men aged 30-39 years live in a marriage with children, and only 63% of men aged 40-50 years. Among both women and men, those most likely to live in



cohabitations are those belonging to the middle age-group (30-39), with a share of about 11%. Respondents who live in extended families, the majority of them with lower education, amounted to 11%. On the other hand, better educated respondents are more likely to live out of wedlock.

- Among men aged 20-50, 50% have no children. In comparison with 2006, the share of men with no children has increased from 45% to 50%, while the percentage of women (aged 20-50) with no children has gone up from 32% to 40%. As much as 44% of men aged 20-29, compared to 26% of women of the same age, have no children.
- When answering the question “How important is family in relation to one’s job,” only 4% of men and 2% of women said that their work is more important to them, while 32% of men and 34% women consider them equally important.
- While in 2006 as much as 84% of female respondents said that parents should do everything they can for their children, this percentage has now dropped to 66%. The sacrificial model of parenting becomes less prominent with the rise in mother’s education, so it is no wonder that as much as 54% among the least educated women “sacrifice for their children”, as opposed to 33% of those with university education.
- As much as 68% of men rarely or never cook, 65% of them rarely or never engage in cleaning/tidying up, and 78% seldom or never wash and iron laundry. Of all the men living in partner relationships, as much as 80% are satisfied with the division of housework, while only 35% of women are satisfied with the level of their partner’s involvement.
- Among men, 80% think that they can count on the support of their partners when they are sad, depressed, or when they are having a hard time, in contrast to 67% of women who feel this way. Only 27% of women with the lowest level of education regard their sexual relations with their partners as harmonious, as opposed to 40% of women with college or university degrees. Most often, in two thirds of the cases, partners jointly decide on birth-control measures, but in other cases women decide more often. Eighty percent of men, as opposed to 60% of women, are satisfied or very satisfied with their partnership relations. In both women and men, the satisfaction rises with education. Eighty percent of men and 85% of women claim there is no family violence in their current relationships.
- One in five men aged 20-50 still believes that male and female children should be raised differently. Only 51% of all respondents claim they never use corporal punishment on their children, while 33% say they do it only rarely. About 11% do so occasionally or frequently. Compared to 2006, the percentage of parents who never use corporal punishment on their children has increased from 47% to 52%. The share of men who never resort to physical punishment with their

children has risen from 48% to 52%, while the figures for women are 46% to 51% respectively.

### **Work, employment and career**

- Men in the sample, compared to women, were more likely to be students, employed in a private company, owners or co-owners of private firms, farmers (as self-employed, who are paying into health insurance and pension scheme), unpaid helping family members (who are not paying into health insurance and pension scheme), self-employed, employed in the informal economy, as well as freelancers. Women in the sample, compared to men, were more likely to be unemployed (as much as 1.7 times more likely than men), “discouraged workers,” i.e. those who do not even register as unemployed because they do not believe they will ever get a job, dependents (nearly three times more often than men), housewives (20 times more often than men), and pensioners.
- Men are equally likely to get a job through friends and contacts as by applying for it, while women most often get it through friends, followed by applying for it. Men are more often self-employed and are more likely to use bribes, while women are more likely to use their party affiliation to gain employment. Only 30% of both women and men got a job through applying for it. Only one in 10 women with no or little education and one in four with a university degree got a job through applying for it.
- Only 23% of men and 17% of women believe that they are paid sufficiently for the work they do. Only about a fifth of all men and women still work in their first job. Men are more likely than women to change jobs. An almost identical percentage of both men and women say they would quit their jobs if they had enough money (43% women and 42% of men).
- While only 29% of women with the lowest education believe that work is a source of stress, this view is shared by 50% of women holding a degree. Better educated women enjoy their work more than those who are not; as much as 56% of women with university degrees, compared to only 10% of women who are least educated, enjoy their work.
- Unemployed respondents, whether officially registered as such or not, still work and make money. As much as 39% of men and 25% of women who are nominally unemployed (de facto) earn a wage in one way or another.

### **Emigration and entrepreneurship**

- Only 26% of parents want their children to live in Serbia. In this respect, men are even more “liberal” than women, with only 23% of fathers versus 29% of mothers wishing that their children stay in the country.

- Compared with the 2006 figures, men have displayed an increasing tendency (from 45% to 51%) to seek emigration, while among women it remained at roughly the same level (42%).
- In terms of the respondents' age, as much as 66% of the youngest men would like to emigrate, and so would 57% of the youngest women.
- When it comes to starting a private business, the figures for 2012 show an almost equal number of those who would consider starting their own business (43%) and those who would not (42%). Here, men show significantly greater readiness to do so than women (47% vs. 39%).
- Women with higher education show the greatest interest in starting a private business, with 47% of them saying they would be interested in it.
- As much as 47% of the youngest women would try their hand at starting a private business if they had an opportunity for it, as well as 65% of the youngest men. Interest in entrepreneurship is obviously increasing among the younger generations.

### **Time use**

- Women spend almost an hour a day less than men doing paid work (four hours as opposed to five hours in men). They also spend half as much time as men doing informal but paid work.
- Women spend more time than men in activities related to child rearing (twice as much) and housework (4.3 times more), as well as in caring for the elderly and children (2.7 times more).
- Paid and unpaid work combined, women work more than men (8:46 versus 7:28 hours per week day, i.e. the difference being one hour and minutes per day).
- Women are much less likely than men to take up sports and they spend less time socializing.

### **Education, knowledge and skills**

- Most of the respondents have a secondary education, men to a slightly greater degree than women (62% versus 60%).
- Women are slightly more likely than men to have computer skills (85%) although it is a minor difference.
- As much as 87% of men and only 58% of women have a driver's license.
- In comparison with the 2006 Gender Barometer data, there has been a significant shift in the use of new technologies. In 2006, internet was used by 48%

of men and 38% of women, while in 2012, it was used by about 80% of both sexes.

- Men more often than women hold a job that matches their qualifications (46% men versus 38% women).
- Women with college and university education hold a job that matches their qualifications in 56% of the cases, compared to 33% of women with secondary education.

### **Transition and influencing their surroundings**

- Only about 27% of men and 26% of women think of themselves as “transition winners.” Nearly half of both women and men cannot assess whether they are transition losers or winners.
- Nearly one of two women with no education considers herself to be a loser. Only 30% of women in urban areas and 24% of rural women consider themselves to be winners.
- Only 17% of women with the lowest education believe that most of their needs have been met, compared to 42% of women with the highest levels of education.
- Among women with no education, 43% believe that the quality of their lives is very unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory; 29% of rural women also gave this answer.
- Only 30% of women with the lowest level of education are satisfied with their lives compared to 54% of women with college or university education.

### **Attitudes about gender**

- A great majority of men (83%) believe that domestic violence should be severely penalized.
- Among women, 85% and among men, 78% agree or strongly agree that “children give life meaning.”
- Among men, 74% and among women, 66% agree or strongly agree that “every woman should be a good homemaker.”
- Among men, 70% and among women, 75% agree or strongly agree that “education is a key to success in life.”
- Among men, 63% and among women, 55% agree that “for a man the most important thing is to earn well.”
- Among men, 33% and among women, 61% agree that “women’s lives are harder than men’s.”

- Among men, 38% and among women, 25% agree that “men are bigger losers in transition.”

A discourse analysis of the responses related to professional life showed that respondents overwhelmingly accept the “dual employment” and “dual career” pattern, i.e. the employment of both man and woman in the family. Normalization of this pattern has been achieved by several generations of women being engaged in paid labor. Employment is an ideal, a norm, but also a need felt by women and recognized by their environment. Limited opportunities for getting a job, combined with solidarity-oriented nature of family and the general pressure of survival, contribute to the deconstruction of the model of male “breadwinner.” This model is more fictitious than real, also because women’s economic contribution is considerable (both paid and unpaid work). De-development and re-patriarchalization increase the pressure on men to be breadwinners and on women to be caregivers. The paradox is that for women, under the pressure of de-development, some adjustments and a reconciliation of the ideological and the actual, the discursive and the tangible have taken place, while for men the gap between these has become more dramatic and has produced a “crisis of masculinity.”

### **The Micro Universe of Care: Discourse Analysis**

The aim of discourse analysis applied to qualitative responses was to map the discourses of everyday life that relate to care, the gaps in these discourses, and the way in which people formulate explanations and rationalizations for care-related activities. It was important to examine how “life philosophies” associated with care are discursively shaped. The goal of this approach was, on the one hand, to deconstruct the engendered nature of care, and on the other, to show the absolute centrality of care in everyday life of men and women.

In Serbian language/cultural environment, discursively the term “care” (*staranje*) is still rarely used. This has to do with a pronounced invisibility of care practices and with the lack of understanding that these practices, however diverse, are basically just different ways of expressing care. At the level of language, in line with this invisibility, we observed the absence of a generally accepted term to encompass a variety of different care practices. Also, on the level of language and discourse there is a partial overlapping of the terms “care,” “care work,” and “caregiving.” This situation is in itself indicative of a very low awareness among the general public of the problems of care. Care refers to activities (work and non-work related, such as communication and play) but also to thoughts; it includes actual behavior and anticipation of the needs of another, responsibility as well as obligation, and an inner need that is born out of love, but also from a sense of duty,

which is socially prescribed and expected, and often deeply interiorized. Care can be institutional and non-institutional, formal and informal.

The main findings of this part of the research are as follows:

- Through the naturalization of care, care is defended as women's practice, which is supported by positive stereotypes (women are "naturally" more caring, more gentle, more sensitive, better parents, etc.). Motherhood is the focal point of defense of the "naturalness" of women's care.
- Care is "invisible" for the most part to the caregivers themselves, as well as to the "objects" of care. There is no discursive space that can accommodate a variety of care practices; there is no language, no knowledge at the level of everyday life that can combine a variety of care practices aimed at children, the sick, persons with disabilities, and the daily reproduction of household members (unpaid domestic work).
- Principal caregivers – women – generally do not know how to describe their care practices as being related to one another, nor can they clearly see the links between care activities and other dimensions of their own lives (including their status on the labor market, career advancement, fatigue, health, etc.).
- At the micro-level, care generates key differences in people's lives. Given the very large variations in the need for care, the scope of care, and involvement of various people, an individual life can either be completely centered on care or very little dependent on care. These differences may be so great that sometimes they become a key determinant not only of individual psychological states (satisfaction, dissatisfaction), but also of the social status of an individual or individuals (professional success, earning capacity, wealth, reputation, etc.). As shown in the qualitative analysis, these differences often outweigh gender differences because pressure and needs produce situations in which gender differences become irrelevant.
- Care can manifest itself differently in women and men, according to their gender roles. Men see their caring role primarily as that of "provider of financial support," i.e. the one whose financial contribution to the family is greater, while women perceive their caring role as consisting of "care work" and "care giving." Care is more visible when it is carried out in the public sphere – that is, when it is professionalized and paid. Regardless of the fact that in real life, much of the care provided by the family and in the household does not lag behind professional care in terms of the quality of services provided, at the level of everyday life, due to this discursive gap, it is not seen, perceived, or recognized as a set of knowledge and skills that transcends women's "natural predisposition" to be good caregivers.

- In many cases, care brings very high intrinsic rewards for caregivers, especially when it comes to child care. If one does not respond adequately and with dedication to needs, especially those of elderly and sick parents and relatives, a feeling of guilt emerges. Condensed and relatively long-term situations of strong conflict of roles between the professional/work role and that of caring for others (children, the sick, the elderly) have a very negative impact on caregivers, including the neglect of their own needs, illness, giving up career or employment, lack of free time, etc.
- Due to de-development, accompanied by a demographic crisis, Serbia is facing a crisis of care, which consists of a chronic lack of financial and human resources to care adequately for those who are in need of care. What appears as a mitigating factor in this situation is, paradoxically, the high unemployment rate of women and even men, which opens up their resources for care of dependents (particularly the elderly) and a high level of “familiarism” – that is, of high regard for the family. The crisis of care, when it comes to older generations, is particularly exacerbated due to the process of emigration of younger generations.

## **Conclusion**

The gender regime of Serbia is being transformed in two separate directions:

1. toward the strengthening of family, while maintaining a certain gender asymmetry, and
2. toward the strengthening of individualization, with an emphasis on symmetry and egalitarianism in family and partnership relations.

However, both directions retain a strong family orientation combined with a decrease in gender inequalities. Family is central to both women and men and is more important to them than work. Work is seen primarily as a means to an end, while the idea of self-actualization through work and career is largely frustrated by high unemployment and low utilization of human potential. Gender roles are being redefined in accordance with the capacities shaped by the social context. The asymmetry of gender roles is a result of different investments of time by women and men into paid and unpaid activities. Unlike men, who do more paid work, women perform more unpaid work, but women, on the whole, spend over an hour a day more than men doing paid and unpaid work combined.

Women and men operate within two different models simultaneously – these are the family solidarity model and the competitive market model. As a consequence, ambivalence in people’s attitudes to gender equality is reinforced. The biggest difference in the attitudes of men and women is related to the assessment of the position of the other gender. Here, an asymmetric picture emerges, where men see themselves as bigger “victims” and in a less favorable position, while women think the same about their position. The transformation of the private sphere in the direc-

tion of egalitarianism is reflected primarily in the fact that women and men perform an increasing number of activities related to home and child-rearing "together." The establishment of an egalitarian model follows the erosion of male patriarchal authority in almost all areas of family life, and the subsequent strengthening of women's authority, i.e. the empowerment of women along the lines of the model of self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy.

Self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy is a transitional form within the emerging general egalitarian trend, which is shaped by the processes of de-development and which has contributed to the strengthening of women's position in the private sphere. However, new generations of men and women are establishing a more egalitarian model, based on the concept of togetherness and shared responsibilities of both parties. Men and women have very similar views on different aspects of life, but the biggest differences of opinion are those related to gender.

The greatest gender disparities in behavior are related to private life and the exploitation of women's resources in the private sphere (the self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy). There is a direct negative relationship between the family responsibilities of women and their position in the labor market. With the current trends of re-traditionalization and re-patriarchalization, men are rather traumatized by being assigned the role of breadwinner. They find themselves in the paradoxical situation where they, just as much as women, hold the family in high esteem, but still do not have a pronounced enough role in family life, while at the same time their options in the public sphere to fulfill their role of breadwinner are very limited. The frustration is reflected in their attitudes about "men having it more difficult" than women and in a general crisis of masculinity. The current gender role of men, exhausted and disrupted to a large extent, accompanied by an authentic strengthening of egalitarianism in both the private and public sphere, despite occasional ups and downs, has contributed to the strengthening of patriarchal ideology in reaction to this situation. However, changes taking place at the level of behavior point to the establishing of genuine egalitarianism, even as attitudes reflect patriarchal ideology. Men resist changes in gender relations and at the same time display more conservative attitudes toward women. Men's failure to adjust is extensively manifested in various aspects related to partnerships, and in particular to parenthood. It ranges from not having any children, to refusing to take equal responsibility for parenting (including active involvement in child-rearing activities, taking custody of children, paying alimony, etc.). Men's failure to assume responsibility in partnership and parenting leads to widely dissimilar assessments of satisfaction with partnership relations: Men are generally much more satisfied than women.

Since employment is the primary source of income, everything related to it has a direct impact on the status of the individual and the family. The permanent employment model (as indicated by the qualitative analysis), especially in the civil service, remains the norm, an ideal, regardless of its practical viability. In a corrupt



environment, civil service offers the possibility of generating social capital and creates opportunities to profit from corruption. In addition, corruption is the easiest way to secure one's employment in the civil service. Meritocracy is severely undermined, as job recruitment through advertisements barely functions in a system based on corruption, nepotism, and clientelism.

The issue of gender is not overly important in many aspects of social existence and general attitudes and it represents a feature of only secondary significance, especially compared to education and the rural-urban divide. Gender is the most important determinant of behavior related to biological reproduction, both the everyday aspect of it and the work of reproducing new generations. However, there are still significant differences between women and men in their opportunities for achieving economic independence. When viewed in relation to family status and the number of children, data indicate that, in the economic sphere, gender operates in the expected direction, that is, toward the exclusion of women and their economic dependence. On the other side, education improves the quality of life of women in different spheres: Better educated women are more satisfied with their work, lives, partnership relations, etc. Education remains the most essential individual strategy to improve one's social position.

Despite the expanding patriarchal ideology, the current situation in gender relations cannot be characterized as a "war between the sexes," not at the micro or the macro levels. The solidarity component at the foundation of family life is too strong, and has been further reinforced during transition, to be seriously shaken by the gender asymmetry in views on true roles of men and women, especially since there is actual change in behavior toward egalitarianism. This asymmetry in attitudes is largely a reflex of patriarchal ideology, which constitutes a reaction to the real-life empowerment of women. It can be argued that a new kind of consensus is emerging on the level of practical problem solving in the ever-gloomier everyday life, which in turn leads to the establishment of new patterns of what is considered normal. Changes in relationships toward achieving greater equality occur gradually, from generation to generation, unless circumstances act in a drastically different direction (e.g. the 1990s on the territory of former Yugoslavia). It is important to note that the change in the rigid patriarchal model already took place a couple of generations ago, primarily among people/women with university education. The strengthening of certain (quasi) traditional and patriarchal values in the public discourse, expressed through acceptance of right-wing ideologies or extreme nationalism, is not simply transferred to the micro level, especially not to the level of actual behavior. Patriarchal legacy is not the only thing, though, that exacerbates the problem of sharing household tasks: What most does it is the overall organization of daily life, which has suppressed normalcy, understood as normal business hours, normal work, and normal pay. Re-patriarchalization and re-traditionalization of family relations are largely due to changes in the environment during transition, and not only to the negative legacy of previous patriarchalism.

# Post-socialist Gender Order in Bulgaria: Between State-socialist Legacy and EU Gender Regulations

Ana Luleva

## Introduction

Since the end of the communist regime in Bulgaria when the state policy of gender equality was no longer on the agenda, public discourse has been saturated with sexist gender stereotypes. Women's organizations were weak and had insignificant social and political influence. Analyzing the first decade of the post-socialist transformation process, some researchers concluded that women were the "big losers" of the transition.<sup>1</sup> Their evidence reveals growing female unemployment, the feminization of poverty, lost social benefits for women, restricted political participation of women, etc. Other authors who were considering "women" as a social category different from "men" with opposing collective interests, concluded that in some sectors of the market economy women had an advantage compared to men because of the cultural capital inherited from the past regime.<sup>2</sup> According to

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<sup>1</sup> Eva Kreisky: Vom patriarchalen Staatssozialismus zur patriarchalen Demokratie. Der politische Systemwechsel in Osteuropa aus der Gender-Perspektive. In Kreisky, E. (Hg.) *Vom patriarchalen Staatssozialismus zur patriarchalen Demokratie*. (Wien, 1996) pp. 7-21; Meryline Rueschemeyer, M. (ed.): *Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY-London 1998); Ulf Brunnbauer: From Equality without Democracy to Democracy without Equality? Women and Transition in Southeast Europe. In Jovanovic, M., Sl. Naumovic, (Eds.) *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe: Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*. (Belgrade-Graz 2002) pp. 219-245. The Austrian feminist Birgit Sauer fairly criticizes this victimization of women, their enclosure in the explanatory framework of victims, because of its proximity to the nostalgic view and it does not allow for an explanation of the relationships between the sexes and the related policy in the new situation: Birgit Sauer: Transition zur Demokratie? Die Kategorie "Geschlecht" als Prüfstein für die Zuverlässigkeit von sozialwissenschaftlichen Transformationstheorien. In Kreisky, E. (ed.): *Vom patriarchalen Staatssozialismus zur patriarchalen Demokratie. Der politische Systemwechsel in Osteuropa aus der Gender-Perspektive*. (Wien, 1996) pp. 131-167). See also Susan Gal, Gail Kligman: *The Politics of Gender after Socialism. A Comparative Historical Essay* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000); Susan Gal, Gail Kligman (eds.): *Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life after Socialism*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Eyal, Gil, Ivan Szelenyi and Eleanor Townsley: *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: the New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*. (London: Verso 1999); Kristen Ghodsee: "Red Nostalgia? Communism, Women's Emancipation and Economic Transformation". In *L'Homme Z.F.G.*, 15, 1, 2004, 33-46; Kristen Ghodsee: *Feminism-by-Design: Emerging Capitalisms, Cultural Feminism and Women's*

Kristen Ghodsee, this is the case with women working in tourism in Bulgaria. Tourism is an intensively developing sector of the economy in the post-socialist period during which women reportedly have been able to turn their cultural capital, gained in the previous period, into economic capital and have succeeded in occupying high managerial positions.<sup>3</sup>

Starting with the presumption that “in Bulgaria women greatly benefited from generous maternity leaves, free education, free health care, free or subsidized childcare, communal kitchens and canteens, communal laundries, subsidized holidays on the Black Sea, and so forth,”<sup>4</sup> the author argues that in the new capitalist order when the previous “rights and entitlements disappeared,” Bulgarian women grew nostalgic for socialism. According to Ghodsee, attempts at encouraging small-scale women’s entrepreneurship after 1989 were unsuccessful because “many women have not fundamentally accepted that it is their responsibility to meet these basic needs in the first place. Women in Bulgaria may have incentives to work for consumer items or to save money to travel abroad, but many may be resistant to the idea of taking loans to start businesses and to make money from the very same things they once had without cost. Instead of self-help, Bulgarian women may prefer to seek political solution, which may explain their political affiliation with leftist parties.”<sup>5</sup>

In my opinion, the argument that “Bulgarian women” are nostalgic and support the political left is a speculative construction rather than one based on reliable empirical data. The data on the votes cast in parliamentary elections do not support such a claim. They show that at present women slightly outnumber men in the electorate of the two main political parties: GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria, center-right) and BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party, left). The fact that women-supporters of BSP are mainly 60 years of age and older<sup>6</sup> may be interpreted as an expression of socialist nostalgia, but this is not a reason to accept such a sweeping claim.

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Nongovernmental Organizations in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe. In: *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 2004, vol. 29, № 3, 727-753; Kristen Ghodsee: *Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*. (Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Kristen Ghodsee, *Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism and Postsocialism on the Black Sea*. (Duke University Press, 2005). For another view towards women in tourism industry, compare Ana Luleva: “Transformation in the Culture of Informality in Post-socialist Period. A Case Study on the Borovetz Tourist Resort”. In: *Stidosteuropa*. 2014, 62, №4, pp. 438-452.

<sup>4</sup> Ghodsee “Feminism-by-Design,” p.747

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 747

<sup>6</sup> <http://temadaily.bg/publication/17822-%D0%9F%D0%BE%D0%B7%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B9-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B9-%D0%B3%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%83%D0%B2%D0%B0/>;  
[http://alpharesearch.bg/bg/socialni\\_izsledvania/socialni\\_publicacii/socialno-demografski-profil-naglasuvalite-v-parlamentarnite-izbori-2013.794.html](http://alpharesearch.bg/bg/socialni_izsledvania/socialni_publicacii/socialno-demografski-profil-naglasuvalite-v-parlamentarnite-izbori-2013.794.html).

The arguments of Kristen Ghodsee cited above indicate a need for a widespread analysis of social processes in post-socialist Bulgaria, taking into account the legacy of state socialism. While I share the view that path-dependency has considerable importance in explaining the post-socialist situation, I would like to underline that it is necessary to consider the state-socialist regime in detail (in some cases we could find pre-socialist gender cultural models as well). We should not essentialize women as a monolithic social group (regardless of “loser” or “winner” definitions). It is necessary to take into account the social, ethnic, and generational distinctions of women and men, their places of residence – in a village, in the countryside, or in the capital city, etc. In this case, we could hardly state that for “women in Bulgaria” socialism represents a source of nostalgia for lost privileges and social services.

My observations indicate that biographical experiences from the time of state socialism are estimated in many aspects and across a very wide emotional range – from trauma to pride – and, in any case, serve as a cultural resource that women use in a changing political and economic context. The continuity of gender attitudes, stereotypes, and strategies in dealing with the difficulties of everyday life will be discussed in the text below. On this point, I would only like to recall that the legacy of state socialism is a necessary but insufficient condition for understanding the socio-cultural processes in post-socialism. For instance, the explanation given by Ghodsee for the limited success of small businesses developed by women needs greater contextualization and inspection of the current gender regime, the economic regime, the work of institutions on which the entrepreneurs depend, the combination of formal order and informal practices characteristic for the country, the high degree of unpredictability and uncertainty facing every small entrepreneur in the country.<sup>7</sup>

In the following sections, I will outline the basic traits of the post-socialist gender order in Bulgaria. Following R. W. Connell, I will use the term “gender order” to describe the “historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity.”<sup>8</sup> According to Connell, “the division of labor, the structure of power, the structure of cathexis are the major elements of any gender order or gender regime.”<sup>9</sup> I share the opinion that with regard to post-socialist societies it is more reasonable to think of a variety of gender orders, rather than only one monolithic gender order and identical labor configuration, power structures, and cathexis.

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<sup>7</sup> Ana Luleva: Antropologičen analiz. In: *Proizvoditelyat na vazmozhnosti. Obrazat na predpriemacha v Bulgaria*. 2013, Sofia: IPI, 15-23. [Luleva, Ana. Anthropological analysis. – The Image of the Entrepreneurs in Bulgaria. 2013, Sofia, IPE, 15-23]

<sup>8</sup> R. W. Connell: *Gender and Power. Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. (Polity Press, 1987), pp. 98-99

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, pp. 98-99

In common for all gender orders, however, we may indicate the rise of the neo-patriarchal gender ideology, the reformulation of gender roles toward re-traditional, deepening inequality between the sexes in the public sphere, and strengthening of gender stereotypes under the influence of luxuriant nationalisms and populisms. These common features outline the new form of patriarchy to be established in post-socialist societies after the end of state patriarchy.<sup>10</sup>

The gender order is constructed as a result of the interaction of internal and external factors. The internal factors include national legislation and policies, political parties, women's organizations, government and civil institutions, media, and so on. EU legislation (treaties, regulations, directives, decisions, and recommendations) applicable to the Member States and UN commissions' decisions regarding gender equality, protection against discrimination and violence are the external factors influencing the national policies and configuration of the relevant gender orders. The impressive body of research – particularly the comparative studies on the gender regimes in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>11</sup> – carried out in the past two decades allow for a more differentiated picture that obviates the view of the socialist period as monolithic, thereby revealing the different impact of external factors in various local contexts.

I will outline here the contours of the Bulgarian post-socialist gender order by using the results of surveys carried out using the methods of different disciplines: economic and sociological studies of the labor market and employment,<sup>12</sup> cultural

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<sup>10</sup> Silvia Walby: *Theorizing Patriarchy*. (Basic Blackwell, 1990); Katherine Verdery: *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton University Press, 1996); Katherine Verdery: From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe. In: Irena Grudzinska-Gross/Andrzej Tymowski (eds.) *Eastern Europe: Women In Transition*. (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main 2013), 15-45.

<sup>11</sup> Johanna Deimel: *Bewegte Zeiten. Frauen in Bulgarien gestern und heute*. München: LDV, 1998; Lynne Haney: "'But We Are Still Mothers': Gender, the State, and the Construction of Need in post-socialist Hungary". In: Boraway, M. K. Verdery (Ed.) *Uncertain Transition. Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*. New York, Oxford, 1999:151-187; Frances Pine: Gendered domains in postsocialist Poland. In: Hann. C. H. (Ed.) *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. (London & New York), 95-113; Shana Penn & Jill Massino: *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009; Krassimira Daskalova, Caroline Hornstein-Tomic, Karl Kaser, Filip Radunovic (Eds.): *Gendering Post-Socialist Transition. Studies of changing gender perspectives*. Lit Verlag: Berlin, Muenster, Wien, Zuerich, London. 2012; Brigitt Riegraf, Hanna Hacker, Heike Kahlert, Brigitte Liebig, Martina Peitz, Rosa Reitsamer (Hg.): *Geschlechterverhältnisse und neue Öffentlichkeiten. Feministische Perspektive*. Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Kapka Stoyanova, Alla Kirova: *Socialno-ikonomičeska infrastruktura i garancii za ravnopostavenost na ženite v Bŭlgarija*. Sofia, 2004 [Kapka Stoyanova, Alla Kirova, Socio-economic infrastructure and guarantees for equal treatment of women in Bulgaria. Sofia, 2004]; Daniel Kergaot, Katya Vladimirova: *Vremeto za trud na ženite I mŕžete: bez prekŕsvane i s prekŕsvane*. Frenskite koncepcii i balgarskite praktiki. In: *Vremeto za trud I uslovoyata za trud*. UI 'Stopanstvo', Sofia 2005, pp. 23-56. [Daniel Kergaot, Katia Vladimirova, Working time for men and women: continuity and discontinuity. The French conceptions and the Bulgarian practices. In: Working Time and Working Conditions. Sofia 2005]

studies of media discourse,<sup>13</sup> legal analysis of legislation and the court practice of sharing custody after a divorce,<sup>14</sup> my own research on the culture of informality from the perspective of gender and political culture.<sup>15</sup> Especially useful for the analysis are the discourses produced by the organizations in the NGO sector, as well as the information shared with me by civil activists and “ordinary” people during my field research and observations. These are field studies carried out in the last 15 years in which I have conducted biographical and thematic interviews with men and women of different generations. The ethnographic study, based on qualitative methods, focuses on the social actors and their biographical experience. It is sensitive to the cultural dimension of the social practices and reveals the attitude of people toward shared/rejected values, norms, expectations, established patterns and notions of proper male and female behavior, social construction of motherhood and fatherhood, childhood, labor, etc. The continued monitoring helps to distinguish different levels of declared views, values, and norms, on the one hand, and everyday practices on the other. And last but not least, my goal is to sense the dynamics and direction of change in the gender arrangements in a changing economic and political context.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the analysis reveals the relationship between the cultural and structural levels. It helps to see how the structural changes find their cultural interpretation by the social actors and how their culture (experience, biographical “baggage”) influences the processes of transformation and construction of the new gender order. Thus, for example, the internalized family ideology and gender ideology have an influence on choosing a certain behavior at the labor market (career choice, striving for a professional career, priorities), and the latter, in turn, drives men and women to adopt corresponding (new) values and practices.

The cultural dimension should be taken into account when analyzing the seemingly illogical situation in the former socialist countries. The period of state

<sup>13</sup> Milena Kirova, Kornelia Slavova (eds.): *Identičnosti v prehod. Rod, medij i populjarna kultura v Bulgarija sled 1989*. Sofia, Polis Publ. 2010; Tatyana Kotzeva: Public Discourses, Social Policies and Gender Arrangements in the Post-Socialist Context of Low Fertility in Bulgaria. In: Heike Kahlert, Sabine Schäfer (eds.) *Gender Journal for Gender, Culture and Society. Engendering Transformation. Post-Socialist Experience on Work, Politics, and Culture*. Barbara Budrich Publishers, Special Issue, 1, 2011. 107–125; Katerina Gehl: Von Tigern, Wölfen und Hyänen oder “Chalga” als Selbst-Wunschbild im postkommunistischen Bulgarien. In: *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie*, 47, 2011, 21-45.

<sup>14</sup> Velina Todorova: Mayki I basti v spor za roditelskite prava: za nov “polov red” v semejnoto pravo. In: *Semeinite otnošenja v promenyastia se svyat. Pravni, sociologičeski i ikonomičeski izmereniya*. Sofia: SIBI, 273-306. [Mothers and fathers in a clash for parental rights: about new ‘gender order’ in the family law. In: The Family relationships in the developing world. Law, Sociological, and Economic Dimensions. Sofia: SIBI, 273-306.]

<sup>15</sup> Ana Luleva: The Informal economy’s contribution to gender inequality in Bulgaria. In: *Welfare States and gender inequality in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ed. by Klenner Christina, Symone Leibner. Brussels: ETUI, 219–239; Ana Luleva: Transformation in the Culture of Informality in Post-socialist Period. A Case Study on the Borovetz Tourist Resort. In: *Südosteuropa*. 2014, 62, №4, pp. 438-452.

support for women's emancipation, for a pro-women policy in the socialist countries, including a large share of female employment, there is a return to traditional patriarchal roles.

### **Labor situation**

Labor and family are two major spheres of self-realization of the sexes. Their interrelation, and the post-socialist gender order and gender contract(s)<sup>16</sup> are projected in the way they combine in everyday life. The latter, as is known, is not constant; it is reviewed (or confirmed) in everyday practices of the relationships between men and women. If, following R.W. Connell, we define masculinity and femininity as positions in the relationship between the sexes, among the practices by which men and women hold these positions,<sup>17</sup> labor is one of the most important. In this sense, Connell says that childcare is a problem that affects not so much women as men: The idea that childcare is an occupation that is not fitting for men is extremely widespread. When men refuse to join the grunge (to do dirty, unfitting work in childcare), they keep the power position. However, participation/non-participation of men in certain types of work at home is the best confirmation that the issue is not about biologically predetermined differences and predispositions of males, but about the idea of such work conforming or not conforming to the image of male labor in practicing gender.

While during post-socialism extensive participation by women in the labor market was a reality, after the system shift, changes occurred in the distribution of paid work between the sexes. There was almost equal participation of men and women in paid employment before 1989. Today, however, men have a higher overall share of employment and dominate the private sector as entrepreneurs and self-employed. Women predominate in lower paid, but more secure work in the public sector, in the lower levels of the private sector and in unpaid family labor.<sup>18</sup> In this respect Bulgaria is no exception to the general trend in the transforming former socialist countries: Female employment and the quality of their work (wages, stability, opportunities for promotion) are worse than those of men.<sup>19</sup> A big

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<sup>16</sup> Klaus Roth (Hg.): *Arbeitswelt – Lebenswelt. Facetten einer spannungsreichen Beziehung im östlichen Europa*. Berlin, LIT, 2006; Irene Dölling: Ostdeutsche Geschlechterarrangements in Zeiten des neoliberalen Gesellschaftsumbaus. In: Schaefer, E., I. Dietzsch, P. Drauschke, I. Peinl, V. Penrose, S. Scholz, S. Voelker. *Irritation Ostdeutschland. Geschlechterverhältnisse seit der Wende*. (Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2005), pp. 16-35

<sup>17</sup> R. W. Connell, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>18</sup> *Zaetost i bezrobotica*, NSI, Sofia, 2005, 4. [Employment and unemployment, National Statistical Institute, Sofia, 2005, issue 4].

<sup>19</sup> Kapka Stoyanova, Alla Kirova, Op. cit., p. 77; Eva Fodor: Feminizaciya na bednostta v šest postsocialističeski obštestva. In: Szeleny, I. (ed.) *Bednostta pri postkomunizma*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2002, pp. 117-139 [See; Fodor, Eva. Feminization of poverty in six post-socialist societies, in: Szeleny, I. (ed.) *Poverty in post-communism*. Sofia, East-West, 2002, p. 117-139]

change compared to the period of state socialism is the revitalization in the public discourse of the patriarchal model (male breadwinner model), according to which women's paramount significance and care are home, family life, and motherhood. As Eva Kreisky wrote, "The democratization meant freedom, including the freedom to be able to choose a traditional female or male identity, unhindered by the socialist or any other country."<sup>20</sup>

Part of the change and the plurality of the gender order in the post-socialist period was the freedom for women to choose the role of a housewife, which became rehabilitated in the new situation. It must be added that in the media discourse gender equality is questioned by essentialist positions as being "socialist-like" and obsolete. Conversely, the prioritized place of care for the family in women's lives<sup>21</sup> is presented as a return to "normality." So, "the normal," "the modern," "the European" is associated with a model in which the man is responsible for the maintenance of the family (male breadwinner model) – a model that is both retrospective (striving toward the pre-socialist model of urban patriarchal family) and prospective (in an effort to achieve the imaginary family of the middle class in Western Europe).

The patriarchal model has been imposed in the media discourse, but in practice it can rarely and only with difficulty be realized. Applicable only for a very limited social layer, it functions as a normative model and a sign of high social status. When its ideology (ethics) is shared by the two working spouses (which is the most widespread case), the consequences are deepened hierarchical relations: The work of women is perceived as less important (for the family) than that of men. This idea, often internalized by women themselves, is the reason why they prefer such work that allows them to have more time for their families.

The construction of the working women primarily as mothers and wives is a prerequisite for their discrimination in the labor market. It is noteworthy that the men, those interviewed by me, do not want their wives to stay at home. The second income in the family is needed because of the unsustainable status and the increased utility options and aspirations. However, men would like their wives to work without interfering with their family "obligations." The normative force of the patriarchal model is also reflected in cases in which men experience a habitus uncertainty with regard to their position in the family, their relations with other men and their self-performance, on grounds of failing to fulfill the role of breadwinner, which is expected of them.

After 1989, the state dropped the paternalistic role toward women-mothers. The state patriarchy was replaced by the "market" patriarchy. In a structured male

<sup>20</sup> Eva Kreisky, Op.cit., p. 12

<sup>21</sup> Ana Luleva: Džender ideologij i prehod. V tãrsene na normalnostta. In: Radost Ivanova (ed.): *Vsekidnevna kultura na bãlgarite i sãrbite v postsocialistiãeskija period*. (Sofia, EIM, 2005), pp. 108-116. [Ana Luleva, Gender ideologies and transition. In search for normalcy. In: Radost Ivanova (ed.) *The everyday culture of Bulgarians and Serbs in the post-socialist period*. Sofia, 2005, p. 108-116.]



model of the labor market, the care for the family and especially the motherhood is seen as a deviation from the norm. This is especially obvious when comparing male and female careers: Usually male careers are ascending and constant, while female careers are interrupted, with a strong (retaining and even descending) impact of the phases of the family life upon them. Unlike for men, for women, family involvement is a factor that strongly influences their professional development.<sup>22</sup> Thus, women are faced with a choice: to make a career, adopting male behaviors (ignoring the family) or being entered as the “weaker sex” in the patriarchal order.

Today, a large proportion of women follow the pattern of combining full-time work and care for the family, but tend to prefer family over work if they have to choose. Indicative of this attitude is the increase in the proportion of housewives and the fact that due to family commitments, 10.5% of women do not search for a job, compared to 2.5% of men.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, when constructing their identity through their family roles and care of the household, women accept the loss of a job more easily than men.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, women more often than men are willing to compromise and accept any job, if they can contribute to the family budget. This is why they are included in the informal economy under discriminatory working conditions. While it was primarily men who held an (unregistered) second job in the early 1990s, (66.7% in 1991, 71.4% in 1994), the percentage of women doing so has risen since the mid-1990s. In recent years, women have made up the majority of workers hired under the table, both for primary and secondary employment.<sup>25</sup> Differences have also been detected in the area of employment. Men predominate among the self-employed and in transportation, construction, and the trades. Women work primarily as unpaid workers in household production and as unregistered employees in the service sector – education, hair and cosmetics, housekeeping and office cleaning; they serve as kitchen staff in hotels and restaurants, work as nurses and care for the elderly, work at home, and work in the tailoring, textile, food and beverage industries.<sup>26</sup> Unpaid work in household production (subsistence economy) is the most common form of informal employment for women. There are twice as many

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<sup>22</sup> Kapka Stoyanova, Alla Kirova, op. cit., p. 72 et seq. On the differences between the sexes in the experience of poverty and the crisis of the male role of breadwinner in Hungary see Fodor, Eva: A Different Type of Gender Gap: How Man and Women Experience Poverty. In: *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 2002, 35, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Kapka Stoyanova, Alla Kirova, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> Ana Luleva: Transformation and Gender Arrangements in Post-socialist Bulgaria. In: *Ethnologia Bulgarica*, 3, 2006, 12-22.

<sup>25</sup> Tanja Čavdarova: *Neformalnata ekonomika*. Sofia: Lik, 2001, p. 22. [Tanja Čavdarova, The Informal Economy. Sofia, Lik, 2001, p. 22]; Lilia Dimova, Polina Radeva: *Ženite v neformalnata ekonomika*. Sofia: ŽAR/ASA, 2006, p. 24 [Lilia Dimova, Polina Radeva, Women in the Informal Economy. Sofia: ŽAR/ASA, 2006, p. 24]

<sup>26</sup> Lilia Dimova and Polina Radeva, Op. cit.

women as men even in the officially registered category of “unpaid family workers.” In the context of a permanent economic crisis, the importance of the family farm as a source of incomes in kind has been preserved in small towns and villages in the post-socialist period. The main burden and time allotted for this work is borne by women.<sup>27</sup>

Women’s willingness to take any job is forcing them to the periphery, including into the informal economy, which in turn further reinforces gender hierarchies. Women hold less prestigious, often hidden and low-paying jobs that do not require much qualification. Women are affected by the negative impacts of the informal economy to a greater extent than men. Women get informal work in addition to their formal employment or are entirely occupied in the informal sector. In many cases in the course of their life, they often switch between the formal and the informal sectors depending on the conditions of the labor market. Different generations of women have different ideas about informal work. Older women are more sensitive to infringements upon their employment rights. They are often unhappy that they are forced to accept jobs without insurance, work safety, or irregular working hours. Younger women seem to accept these conditions as a given and think that it is trivial to assert their rights, especially gender equality, given the inevitability of working. The ethos of survival predominates in the informal economy and precludes obeying and defending the employment rights of employees. For everyone, the informal work is a strategy for contributing to family welfare, which indicates the economic activity of women and at the same time deepens the gender inequality.

The labor division in the family is another source of gender inequality.

## Childcare

In the period of state socialism, a gender contract of the “working mother” was imposed.<sup>28</sup> It turned out to be “comfortable” for the men and functional under the new conditions, when, as a result of the limitation of social services and the withdrawal of the state after the 1990s, the caring for children and family was “naturally” assumed by women. While at the time of state socialism giving birth and upbringing (and education) of children was a “public issue,” after 1989 it became a private, family matter. As a result of the new social policy, the restriction of social services, and the initial collapse in their quality, childcare was entirely

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel Kergaot, Katya Vladimirova, Op. cit. pp. 23-56.

<sup>28</sup>After the 1960s a general trend for all of the so-called East block countries was manifested – the withdrawal from the initial pathos of equality and freedom and imposing in the public discourse of the image of the working mother, devoted to family and children – one much closer to traditional notions ideal. Ana Luleva: “Die Frauenfrage” im sozialistischen Bulgarien – Ideologie, Politik, Realität. In: Roth, Kl. (Hg.) *Sozialismus: Realitäten und Illusionen. Ethnologische Aspekte der sozialistischen Alltagskultur*. Wien, Verlag des Instituts für Europäische Ethnologie 2005, 129-155.

taken over by the family, which made it a major concern of the mother. She is assisted by the older generation of relatives – grandparents, great-grandparents, or paid nannies. After the child is 3 years old, parents frequently rely on kindergarten, but the mentioned informal solutions retain their relevance as an additional aid for certain hours of the day, in case of sickness, vacation, etc. Today, raising children is an amalgamation (“patchwork”) of formal and informal resources. This is not unique to Bulgaria. As shown by studies in Spain, Italy, and Scandinavia, kinship networks have had significance and are important for raising children of working mothers.<sup>29</sup> When the social services are insufficient – of insufficient quality or accessibility, and in all extreme cases – the help of grandmothers, great-grandmothers and female caregivers is crucial for dealing with the problem. In the practice of raising children (especially under 3 years of age) in the European Mediterranean countries, care is assumed by a network of women – some women helping other women to be able to work, to make a professional career.

These networks include Bulgarian women who are hired as nannies in Spain or Italy, but they themselves rely on their mothers and mothers-in-law for raising their children in Bulgaria. Such is the situation in which childcare is primarily thought of as an obligation and responsibility of the mother. All women replacing the mother in this work confirm this gender division of household labor and thus reinforce the patriarchal order in the family. In the Scandinavian countries, this phase is lived out. Thanks to the sufficiently good social services, parents have abandoned informal strategies and practice partnership division of labor in childcare.

The adoption of the provision for parental leave in the EU member states aims at stimulating the equal participation of fathers in child rearing. It was also adopted in Bulgaria and this act was assessed as a step forward in the establishment of partnerships in caring for children. How do things look in everyday life? Although it is usually agreed that childcare should be divided equally between both parents, quantitative studies register a deepening of the asymmetry between the sexes in terms of domestic work in the last 15 years. One recent study showed that fathers spend half as much time daily with their children as mothers. The fathers are with children 65 minutes a day on average, which is 66.8% of their time in domestic work, while women spend 115 minutes per day with children – almost twice as much as men, which is 43.2% of the women’s time on domestic work.<sup>30</sup> The care for children and household is perceived as a major concern of the woman. The reasons for this can be sought in different directions. Undoubtedly, they have an economic aspect – poverty can “solidify” the traditional roles in the family. The

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<sup>29</sup> Leira, Arlaug, Constanza Tobii, Rossana Trifiletti: Verwandtschaftsnetze und informelle Unterstützung: Betreuungsressourcen für die erste Generation erwerbstätiger Mütter in Norwegen, Italien und Spanien. In: Gerhard, U., T. Knijn, A. Weckwert (Hsg.): *Erwerbstätige Mütter. Ein europäischer Vergleich*. (München, C.H. Beck Verlag, 2003), pp. 131-162.

<sup>30</sup> Maria Nikolova: Domašna rabota: rezultati ot empirično sociologičesko izsledvane [Maria Nikolova, Domestic work: results of an empirical sociological study]. in *Naselenie*, 2005, 1-2, 138.

hierarchical relations deepen when women are unemployed and unpaid family workers. Part of the explanation for the repeatedly registered unequal division of domestic work and childcare is found in the field of culture. It involves the concepts of division of labor between the sexes in the family, of maternity and paternity, which are culturally and historically formed. Work at home, caring for children is part of the patriarchal concept of motherhood, but not fatherhood. The “good father” does not necessarily clean the house and wash children’s clothes. He at best “helps.” Women often find this “help” sufficient and view it as an indication that the equality of men and women achieved in the time of socialism remains a reality.

The problem of the insensitivity of the Bulgarian women to gender inequality requires a specific analysis. Irene Dölling observed a similar problem in the former GDR. She analyzed some of the habitual practices of East German women inherited from the socialist period and concluded that the women’s attitude toward full employment in the labor market is a “biographical resource” that helps women in the new situation, while the gender equality taken for granted under state socialism makes women vulnerable to discriminatory practices, often hidden behind the criteria of individual (regardless of gender) success and achievements. Moreover, since they accepted that gender equality has been achieved, women appreciate the little “help” of the spouses in the household as being sufficient.<sup>31</sup>

The traditional (hierarchical) division of labor at home or peer sharing of childcare and housework can be practiced in the model family with two working spouses. The latter practice is characteristic of higher educated partners from the younger generations who live separately from their parents. In the partnership type of family, a new type of father appears who seeks active involvement in raising children and sharing childcare in the family. A poll conducted in 2014 showed that they encounter rigid stereotypes according to which the daily care for children and home “is not a man’s job,” and face insufficient public awareness of the importance and support of the fatherly role in caring for children. The same survey registered a new trend: more and more parents raise their children alone without the help of grandparents. This case confirms the “law” of Elizabeth Bott, according to which the looser the family kinship networks are, the less segregated the roles of the spouses become.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, “nine out of 10 respondents from all groups agree with the statements that the most important role of the man is to provide for his family, and of the woman to take care of home and children.”<sup>33</sup> The committed involvement of fathers in childcare motivates them to pursue equal rights with the mothers in obtaining child custody after a divorce. Using the rhetoric of equal gender rights, these fathers are organized and try to affect change in the law that governs the functions of parents after a divorce.

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<sup>31</sup> Irene Dölling, *Op.cit.*, p. 28-30.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Bott Spillius: *Conjugal Roles and Social Networks*. In: *Human Relations*, 8, 1955, 345-384.

<sup>33</sup> <http://mencare.bg/sociologichesko-prouchvane-naglasi-bashtinstvo>

### **Gender Issues and Women's Organizations**

The degree of gender equality sensitivity of Bulgarian women is explicit enough from the fact that Bulgarian women engage in civil activities only if they feel affected in their roles as mothers and when they protect the rights of children: about delayed child allowances, about the amount of benefits for rearing of a baby, about increased fees for kindergartens, against the killing of children on the road, and about better treatment by doctors and midwives during childbirth. However, women do not resist the sexist media discourse, do not protest against gender inequality, wage inequality, the glass ceiling, and domestic violence – topics on the agenda of European women's organizations and subjects of public debate in the EU.

The socialist ideas of equality of men and women were abandoned in the public discourse during post-socialism, but their place was not filled by a new democratic debate on gender equality. The terms of transformation, in which economic indicators and macro political criteria for EU accession were postulated as most important, have predetermined as insignificant all other problematic spheres that did not fall into the mainstream criteria of modernity and readiness to join the EU. One such a minor problem in this process was the widening inequality between the sexes.

Underestimation, tacit acceptance, and lack of sensitivity to gender inequality and discrimination indicate that in Bulgaria they are seen as part of the normal gender order. The reluctance to change the existing gender order occurred in the pre-accession phase, but also after 2007 when the Bulgarian government had to conform its legislation to the EU. There was tension between the accepted factual normality and the norms dictated from "outside." Activity on the topic of gender equality and anti-discrimination policies were demonstrated on the eve of Bulgaria's accession to the EU as part of the pre-accession measures that had to be taken by the Bulgarian government and Parliament. Under the terms of Chapter 13, "Social Policy and Employment," the accelerated adoption of detailed and effective anti-discrimination legislation and a law on equal treatment for men and women was envisaged. A law on gender equality was never adopted. Back then and today, politicians do not find it necessary. No less important is the fact that public debate on this topic was not initiated. The imposed assumption was that the law for protection against discrimination, adopted in 2004, governed the relations of equal treatment of men and women as well.

In the media discourse, issues of gender equality, domestic violence, and overcoming gender stereotypes were discussed by the NGO sector – women's organizations and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. NGOs are indispensable partners of the state administration in the preparation of documents related to the implementation of policies on gender equality. But when tracing the actions of the

Bulgarian institutions coordinating the Bulgarian legislation with the documents adopted by the European Parliament, we see a behavior of simulation.

According to T. Kmetova, the executive director of the Center for Women's Studies and Policies (CWSP), in Bulgaria the lack of a law on gender equality is due to the lack of political will and understanding among policy makers of the need for such a law, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the lack of a mass women's organization that reflects the interests of women and makes them a subject of political debate. Such debate was not initiated by the political parties, which, as a rule, marginalized women's organizations in their structures. Bulgarian women are highly socially differentiated; they sympathize with parties across the political spectrum. In elections, they vote regardless of the sex of the candidates. Women in the Bulgarian political elite also did not show sensitivity to the themes of equality of men and women and, in fact, supported the patriarchal gender order.

The masculinization of the language of female politicians expresses their desire to enter the political elite "like men" and to distance themselves from the femininity degrading their professional qualities. The latest example of the willingness of female politicians to express themselves in the political scene "like the men," following the male model, was the slogan in the promotional campaign of the female politician Tatyana Doncheva in the October 2014 Parliamentary elections. It read: "Support Tatyana Doncheva, the only man in Bulgarian politics." Another common choice of women in politics is to be presented in the stereotypical roles of "mothers," "ladies," hosts who will clean the house, who are communicative by nature, serving men and so on. Thus, they again reinforce the patriarchal gender order and enter it as the "weaker sex."

In this way, gender has practically become reaffirmed as a criterion in the social order. Stereotypes about the sexes (some of them openly discriminating against women) are being reproduced on all levels: in popular TV broadcasts, in everyday political conversation. The patriarchal values are reinforced in the political culture through the behavior and statements made by Boyko Borisov, the leader of GERB, who won a majority in several consecutive elections and is one of the main actors in Bulgarian political life. He represents perhaps the most vivid example of hegemonic masculinity in Bulgaria. The women in "his" party are given the role of a loyal entourage.

Bulgarian researchers and gender rights activists wrote a lot about gender stereotypes, reinforced through the mass media, *chalga* (popular folk music) culture, and advertising.<sup>34</sup> They found that images of women in advertising are made to look stereotypical in many cases – degradingly sexist. In their report on

<sup>34</sup> Milena Kirova, Kornelia Slavova (eds.): Op. cit.; Tatyana Kotzeva: Op. cit., pp. 107-125; Katerina Gehl: Op. cit., pp. 21-45; Genoveva Tisheva, Abena Koycheva: *Gender Stereotyping – a pervasive and overlooked source of Discrimination against Women in Bulgaria. Special Alternative Report to the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th governmental report 52nd session of CEDAW Committee 9-27 July, 2012/ June 2012*, [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/BGRF\\_for\\_the\\_session\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/BGRF_for_the_session_en.pdf).

gender stereotypes as a source of discrimination against women, Genoveva Tisheva and Albena Koycheva, representatives of one of the few active women's organizations, make an assessment of the media discourse, ads, and institutional decisions, including the court, in terms of gender stereotyping. They emphasize that although the fight against stereotyping is mentioned as necessary in the National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality 2009-2015 and accordingly noted in the national plans on gender equality in the last three years, the country is lacking adequate gender equality policies, associated with the missing supervision and implementation by the state of well forgotten legal provisions in the Anti-Discrimination Law in force since 2004. They write: "This vacuum of policy and legislation in the field of gender stereotyping, combined with the absence of supervision and regulation, where needed, of the liberalized market in media and advertisement, is in the genesis of the distorted, offensive, and beyond all limits humiliating images of women."<sup>35</sup> This phenomenon does not result solely from the gap in state policy. It is also condoned and justified by the state, according to Tisheva and Koycheva. The feminist activists scrutinize in detail the opinions of the Council for Electronic Media, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, and the decision of the Bulgarian Court regarding the complaints of Bulgarian women against advertisements that have messages degrading for women. Their scrutiny reveals that in most cases the Bulgarian institutions tolerate gender stereotyping and accept the representation of women as objects and their vulgar sexualization in advertising.

The final recommendations of the Committee for Eliminating Discrimination against Women in Bulgaria (CEDAW) were published in July 2012. They expressed concern about the persistent imposition of stereotypical models that overemphasize the traditional role of the woman as mother and wife, and thus influence her educational and professional choices. It is also noted that the media constantly impose a commercial and sexual image of women. It is pointed out that the legal instruments related to the prevention and protection of victims of domestic violence need to be improved. The disadvantaged position of women from minorities, refugees, elderly women, and women with disabilities is also emphasized. Although the government has approved the National Program for Prevention of and Fight for Protection Against Domestic Violence in 2012, the changes in the legislation are delayed, real steps to improve the functioning of institutions, including the training of junior judges and prosecutors in cases of domestic violence, have not been made.

One year after the publication of the final recommendations of the CEDAW, the Bulgarian government adopted a plan for their implementation. One of the

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<sup>35</sup> Genoveva Tisheva, Albena Koycheva, 2012, p. 3. See also Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack: *Gender Stereotyping. Transnational Legal Perspectives*. University Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 2010.

recommended measures is to sign and ratify the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The Bulgarian government, however, is not eager to implement this measure quickly. The deadline set is “not before June 2015.” The answer of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the question raised in the Parliament testifies to the attitude of the executive power regarding this problem. In March 2014 the member of the Parliament from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), Tuncher Kardzhaliev, asked Foreign Affairs Minister Christian Vigenin, about the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the signing and ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The minister replied that the Bulgarian side had not taken actions for signing and ratification. He first made the proviso that the Bulgarian state was not required to sign and ratify the convention. He pointed out that it included questionable texts and that the convention had received “generally mixed assessment in the Committee of Ministers of the CE.” He argued that since the opening of the convention for signature in May 2011 until the present, it had been ratified by only 11 of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. “That fact in itself justifies a certain restraint in assessing the need for accession to this convention,” he said. Finally, he stressed that “Bulgaria has an adequate internal and international legal framework guaranteeing compliance with the highest standards in the protection of women against violence.”

On August 1, 2014, the Istanbul Convention came into force. The Convention obliges the states, parties to it, to take comprehensive measures for protection against all forms of gender-based violence such as rape and sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual harassment, persecution, forced marriages, and so on. The Bulgarian authorities have not yet committed even politically. Bulgaria is among the small group of countries that have not signed it. NGOs believe that “the isolation from vital European standards is inadmissible.”

Are the activities of the Bulgarian NGOs in changing the Bulgarian legislation to conform with European standards “feminism-by-design,” as Kristen Ghodsee characterizes the work of Bulgarian women’s organizations after 1989? Or, following this logic, could we say that this is an “Europeanization-by-design?” I would not agree with this definition. I believe that it underestimates the meaning of the work of the few NGOs in the field of women’s rights. I could not agree that their work in education, in training of administration, in prevention and protection of women-victims of violence, in their activities for making legislative changes toward gender equality is driven by a blind adaptation of foreign models and the introduction of measures to non-existent problems in Bulgarian society. The presented stereotypes of women in the media discourse and advertising, the high percentage of women victims of domestic and sexual violence, the persistent differences in pay for equal work between men and women, the differences between the pensions of men and women are all evidence of existing gender inequalities in Bulgaria. These are not imaginary problems, as the Europhobes,



sexists, racists, and nationalists claim on forums. EU-related policies are in full force for Bulgarian women as well. And women's organizations, although weak, are an important strategic partner of the state in implementing these policies.

## **Conclusion**

During the post-socialist transformation some of the practices and gender arrangements inherited from state socialism proved to be vital and appropriate in the new circumstances. These practices include the active participation of women in the labor market, combining paid work with caring for family, children, and adults along with involvement in the domestic economy. Trends typical of the post-socialist gender order and a new form of patriarchy appeared: publicly imposed patriarchy in which women are recognized primarily as mothers and wives, a lack of awareness by both sexes of gender stereotyping, permanently giving rise to gender inequality. Stimulated from outside (EU and UN), national policies on women's empowerment and protection against discrimination are in contrast with the low sensitivity of the women themselves to acts of inequality and discrimination. Therefore, these policies have a more formal nature. Domestic and foreign observers recorded the fact that the vast majority of women in Bulgaria have little knowledge of the legislation relating their rights and rarely are ready to defend those rights in court. To this must be added the lack of interest in self-organization and active solidarity actions unless women are affected in their capacity as mothers. Specific women's interests are not usually a subject of essential debate in the election programs of the political parties. Despite weak public and institutional support, non-governmental women's organizations continue to fight for the education and protection of women's rights and for achieving a more equitable gender order in Bulgaria.

# Position of women in Montenegro – key issues, specific needs, and bottlenecks

Maja Raičević

## Introduction

Gender equality, gender roles, and discrimination against women are topics that in a Montenegrin context appeared only recently, attracting attention primarily due to the activities of a few women's NGOs and the inclusion of Montenegro in the process of European integration. The fact that gender equality is one of the questions that are set as a priority<sup>1</sup> in Montenegro's accession policy toward the European Union (EU) represents a significant challenge for one of the most traditional Balkan states.

In order to meet the demanding criteria of the EU integration process, as well as the standards recognized by numerous ratified international documents, the Montenegrin government has improved the legal framework and has adopted policies aimed at enhancing gender equality in this country. Policy measures include combating violence against women, fighting discrimination of women in the labor market, increasing the participation of women in political life, etc. Nevertheless, the implementation of these measures remains problematic, once again illustrating that the patriarchal culture is deeply seated, both in the private sphere and within state institutions.

One of the pivotal characteristics of the country is the prevailing gender division of roles within the society along traditional lines (family and home obligations are largely considered women's responsibilities) and the culture of gender stereotypes that foster differing opportunities for women and men and unequal distribution of power and position in the society.

## Participation of women in decision making

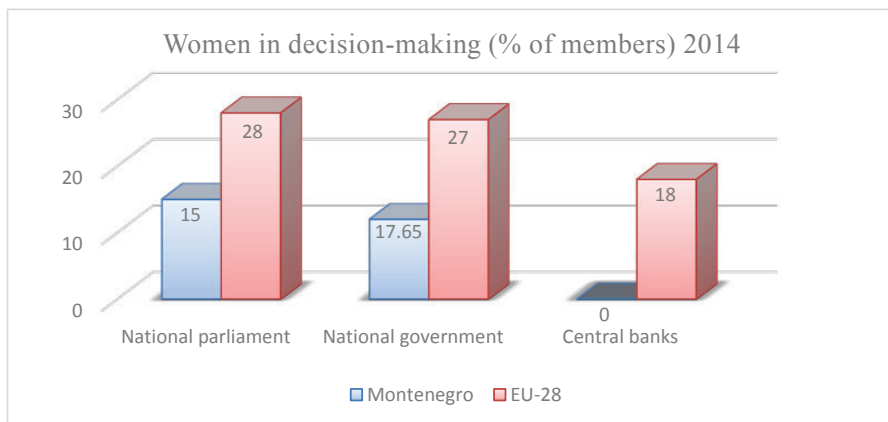
Traditionalism and traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched in the Montenegrin culture. Women's role is that of main caregiver at home while their participation in the public sphere is still considered unusual. The situation is well

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<sup>1</sup> Accession document "European Union common position, Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights", Conference on accession to the European Union—Montenegro, Brussels, 12 December 2013 (OR. en) AD 17/13 LIMITE CONF-ME 13, pp.15

illustrated by the fact that Montenegro ranks at the very bottom among countries in its region for political participation by women.

TABLE 1



In 2011, as a follow-up to the Venice Commission’s recommendations concerning the need to improve parliamentary representation of women, Montenegro amended its “Law on Election of Members of Parliament and Councilors” to include a formal requirement that women comprise at least 30% of each electoral list in order for that list to be validated by the Election Commission. However – as proven in the 2012 parliamentary elections – this provision failed to ensure that women would comprise at least 30% of parliament because, their names appearing mostly at the bottom of the ballot, they had no real chance to win. As a result – despite the fact that women comprise the majority of the Montenegrin electorate – they ended up with only 15% of the seats in the parliament. A similar situation was observed at the local level, where women made up only 14% of municipal assembly councilors.

In 2013, Montenegro again addressed election law reform. Women’s NGOs prepared formal recommendations, including that at least one woman be included among every three candidates on the electoral list, i.e. starting from the first to the third, from the fourth to the sixth, and so on<sup>2</sup>. The recommendation did not pass. Instead, an amendment ensuring one place for women in every four candidates presented by the ruling party was approved. Although the adopted amendment

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<sup>2</sup> Joint press release of Montenegrin non-governmental organizations: <http://cgo-ccce.org/en/2013/10/11/zajednicko-saopstenje-za-javnost-nevladinih-organizacija/#.Vg1E1yuQICE>

represents some progress in creating conditions for more political participation by women, it nevertheless is not in accordance with the recommendations of either the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument expert team (TAIEX)<sup>3</sup> or of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>4</sup> because it does not lead to the required standard that women comprise not less than 30% of the representatives in parliament and local authorities. The failure to comply with international recommendations and to adopt respective regulations has occurred for the second time in the last three years. It again indicates the huge reluctance of a male-dominated parliament to ensure a more equal division of power between women and men.

### Violence against women

According to the results of the “Study on domestic violence and violence against women in Montenegro,”<sup>5</sup> 92% of surveyed citizens believe that domestic violence is present in Montenegrin society. Victims of family violence are usually women and children, while men are recognized as perpetrators of violence. Data from the police, judiciary, prosecution, and misdemeanor courts for the last three years identify an 18.8% increase in the number of violent crimes against women in 2013, and the trend is continuing in 2014, as well. Men comprised 94.5% of all persons prosecuted for the criminal act of family violence.<sup>6</sup>

However, this trend hasn't been followed by social condemnation of violence and by any effective state response. Court statistics<sup>7</sup> indicate only a mild penal policy, a tendency to impose suspended sentences (66% in 2013), and a significant number of dismissal and acquittal judgments (52% in 2013). These circumstances send a disturbing message of social and institutional inertia, especially to victims who risk personal safety in order to report abuse and violence. During 2013 and

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<sup>3</sup> TAIEX *Comments on the Law amending the Law on Election of Councillors and Representatives* (7 February 2014), JHA IND/EXP 55578

<sup>4</sup> *The Final Conclusions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, 15th session Geneva, 21 October 2011, at:

<http://www.mmp.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?Id=90081&rType=2> p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *The Study on Violence against Women and Family Violence in Montenegro*, United Nations Development Fund Office in Montenegro (May 2012), at:

<http://www.me.undp.org/content/dam/montenegro/docs/publications/si/Gender/Study%20on%20Family%20Violence%20and%20Violence%20against%20Women.pdf>, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> *Report on the implementation of the strategy of protection against domestic violence for the year 2013*, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare of Montenegro (Podgorica, May 2014) pp.14,15,16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

2014, women's NGOs that provide services for victims,<sup>8</sup> have conducted the monitoring of law implementation in the area of family violence and violence against women in Montenegro. The monitoring supported a general conclusion that numerous cases of family violence either have 1) not been effectively investigated or that the court proceedings have been delayed, or 2) that the sentences for obvious maltreatment appeared to be extremely mild. The report also states that "even though the law gives possibility for a victim to seek protective measures, what is of concern is that those already scarce requests sometimes are dismissed as groundless and without enough evidence." The monitoring furthermore shows that the interests and testimony of the victims were not the central concern in the conduct of either law enforcement or the courts and that the multi-sectoral approach to the issue of violence has not yet been efficiently implemented. As a consequence, victims were required to take part in a large number of parallel processes during which no victim protection was ensured. Both, inefficiency and a lack of the urgency principle in legal procedures were documented, even in cases of endangered children and elderly women, both of whom are entitled to special protection under the law. The study on family violence and violence against women underlined the need to further educate civil servants, police, and judicial institutions on how to implement laws and protocols in this area and how to address the needs of victims from a *gender perspective*. Moreover, tracking of procedures showed that the limited use of procedures, the lack of knowledge combined with common prejudices still cause institutional discrimination against survivors of violence, which has serious consequences for the victim herself, for her environment (family, work, school, friends, et. al.) and society as a whole. Such a situation, together with the lack of state-funded specialized services for victims, suggests a systemic problem in respecting legal norms and international standards in the area of family violence, particularly the standards of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) that was ratified by Montenegro in 2013.

### **Traditional harmful practices**

Violence against women and girls goes hand in hand with traditional harmful practices that can be eradicated only with a change of mindset in the society. One of the very harmful forms of discrimination silently approved even among well-educated members of the community and quite widespread in patriarchal societies are *sex selective abortions*. This phenomenon threatens the society to such an extent that in Montenegro the balance between the sexes in the population of newborn

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<sup>8</sup> Maja Raičević: *Protection and access to justice of women victims of violence within a family context - Monitoring of criminal proceedings by NGO Women's Rights Center, NGO Women's Safe House and NGO SOS Telephone Nikšić (Podgorica, November 2014).*

children has already been disrupted. According to the United Nations, some 100 girls are born for every 110 boys in Montenegro, while the usual ratio is 100 to 102-104. The Council of Europe urged Montenegro in March 2014 to stop gender selective abortions after statistics showed a significant imbalance between the number of newborn male and female babies.<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Population Fund Report<sup>10</sup> estimates that the world is missing about 117 million women compared to men, the cause of which is primarily prenatal sex selection. The report states: “This distorted demographic masculinization, which has serious social and economic implications, is not a natural phenomenon but is achieved through a deliberate elimination of girls.” Although gender-selective abortion has been prohibited in Montenegro since 2009, the solution is not simple and requires the raising of awareness and the education of boys and girls from an early age.

Another extremely harmful practice present in the region, mostly, but not exclusively, in Roma communities, is *forced marriage*. According to UNICEF, in Roma settlements in Montenegro almost one in five women (18%) and one in 10 men (7%) married before the age of 15. One of the most common motives for entering into arranged marriage is money and the “price” realized for girls ranges from 3,000 to 15,000 euro.<sup>11</sup> There were several reported cases of the forced marriage of children, but the NGO sector explains that it is difficult to prove this type of criminal offense and therefore only very rarely do cases end up in court. The girls who were subjects of forced marriages were sent back to their families, as were those who forced them into marriage, clearly showing that institutions justify such horrific practice by customary law and tradition.

### **The impact of gender roles on discrimination against women in the labor market**

Gender-stereotyped roles are mirrored in the large discrepancy in the distribution of family and home duties between women and men. In Montenegro, women spend 3.7 hours a day on average (up to 4.5 hours per day for married women) in the performance of care work, while men (married or not) spend only 1.5 hours on average. Out of the total number of people who claim never to perform domestic tasks (11% of the population), the vast majority (96%) are men.<sup>12</sup> The prevailing

<sup>9</sup> [www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/council-of-europe-urges-montenegro-to-quit-gender-selective-abortions](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/council-of-europe-urges-montenegro-to-quit-gender-selective-abortions).

<sup>10</sup> “*Sex imbalances at Birth*”, United Nations Population Fund (Bangkok, August 2012), at:

<http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Sex%20Imbalances%20at%20Birth.%20PDF%20UNFPA%20APRO%20publication%202012.pdf>, p.22.

<sup>11</sup> Adnan Prekic: *Stuck between law and Tradition*; at: <http://www.balkaneu.com/stuck-tradition-law/>

<sup>12</sup> *Socio-economic position of women in Montenegro*, European Movement in Montenegro and IPSOS Strategic Marketing. (Podgorica 2013), at:

traditional division of gender roles does have an impact on employment and unemployment rates of women and men, i.e. a relatively high gender employment gap of 9.1 percentage points in favor of men. In 2013, the share of women inactive in the labor market due to personal and family responsibilities was 35.2%, much higher than the 8.4% share of men. The study “Socio-economic position of women in Montenegro”<sup>13</sup> indicates that 93% of family care givers (caring for children and the elderly) are women. According to the same research, 89% of those women aged 15-64 and inactive at the labor market are so due to their personal and family responsibilities. It is obvious that Montenegrin women face greater challenges in reconciling work, career, and family obligations than men, also owing to the insufficient public care services, especially for children. According to the key results of the knowledge, attitude, and practices survey conducted by UNICEF in June 2009, among 1,000 Montenegrin parents of children under age 6, 82% answered that it was the mother who primarily takes care of the child.<sup>14</sup>

TABLE 2

<b>Employment rate (2013) – 15 -64</b>	<b>Montenegro</b>	<b>EU-28</b>
<b>Men</b>	51,9	69,4
<b>Women</b>	42,8	58,7

Informal work is a phenomenon that needs to be considered when discussing labor market conditions in the country. Women in Montenegro face an unfavorable position on the labor market due to discrimination and widely present informal work.<sup>15</sup> Labor inspectorates are outdated and understaffed and although deterrence measures have been implemented, the fight against informal work is still “in its infancy.”<sup>16</sup> Generally, public authorities are not in a position to provide adequate protection to all workers including women, either when accessing (applying for) work or at the workplace. In this context, protection against discrimination in accessing work or at-work risks remains only words on paper. Available

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<http://emim.org/files/socio-ekonomski%20polozaj%20zena%20u%20crnoj%20gori.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> UNDP: Women Entrepreneurship in Montenegro; 2009, available at:

<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/montenegro/docs/publications/si/Gender/Women%20entrepreneurship%20in%20Montenegro.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Maja Raičević: Peer Country Comments Paper – Montenegro; EU Commission, April 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Marijana Barić and Colin C Williams: *Combating the undeclared economy in Montenegro*, 40 Journal of Economy and its Applications ISSN: 2217-7973, Volume 2 Issue 2 (2012), at: <http://www.ilirias.com> pp. 40-62.

publications<sup>17</sup> as well as the analysis of the cases addressed by the Ombudsperson<sup>18</sup> indicate the existence of gender discrimination in the labor market and in the access thereto. Gender discrimination affects working conditions, salary and other benefits, education, and career advancement. Women risk losing their jobs or being left behind in their career because of pregnancy and are at risk of sexual harassment. Furthermore, gender discrimination is also a barrier in accessing the labor market. During job interviews, women are often asked questions of a personal nature on issues such as pregnancy, family planning, etc. Answers to these questions are crucial to employers' decisions on whether to hire a woman or not.

Gender stereotyped roles not only affect access to the labor market but are among the causes of gender segregation. Gendered, horizontal occupational segregation was investigated in the study "Socio-economic status of women in Montenegro."<sup>19</sup> This study showed that men's preferred occupations are all functions of power, while women's are most frequently focused on services and care of others (the so-called care economy: home jobs, childcare, care of the elderly, sick, and, adult family members, etc.). Recent national employment policies put the emphasis on promoting women's self-employment. However, persistent gender stereotyping in business and society and the resulting gender segregation in education and occupations impede a successful implementation of programs for women entrepreneurs. Obstacles for boosting women entrepreneurs are, for example, that only few women possess assets or property that makes them creditworthy. As a consequence, they are not able to access the necessary financing, which again has to do with a still widespread customary law according to which a woman has to renounce property in favor of male relatives.

<sup>17</sup> Branka Vlahović, Djuro Nikač: *Discrimination against women in the workplace*, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Department for Gender Equality Affairs, (Podgorica,2010) at:

<http://www.minmanj.gov.me/rubrike/Publikacije/102856/Promovisan-prirucnik-Diskriminacija-zena-naradnom-mjestu.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Annual report of Montenegrin Ombudsperson (Podgorica,2013), at:

[http://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/izvjestaji/Final\\_Izvjestaj\\_za\\_2013\\_05042014.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/izvjestaji/Final_Izvjestaj_za_2013_05042014.pdf), p.149.

<sup>19</sup> *Socio-economic position of women in Montenegro*, European Movement in Montenegro and IPSOS Strategic Marketing, Podgorica 2013, at:

<http://emim.org/files/socio-ekonomski%20polozaj%20zena%20u%20cmoj%20gori.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> *Marriages and divorces in Montenegro, 2013*, Montenegro Statistical Office Release, number118, Podgorica, 30 April 2014) at:

<http://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/demografija/brakovi/2013/Sklopljeni%20i%20razvedeni%20brakovi%20u%202013-engl%20.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Krassimira Daskalova, Caroline Hornstein Tomic , Karl Kaser, Filip Radunovic (Editors): *Gendering Post-Socialist Transition. Studies of Changing Gender Perspectives*, the Study by Marina Blagojević: *Single parents in the Western Balkans: Between Emotions and Market*, ERSTE Foundation Series, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2012, pp.219-247.



## **Conclusion**

A consequence of the tribal community as the dominant form of social organization in Montenegro was, until the 18th century, that a woman as an individual was completely invisible and subordinated to her husband and community interests. The tribal heritage had and has a significant impact on the life of women, even now.

Important progress has been made since the Second World War, although not in proportion to the contribution that women made to the fight against fascism. This still rather glorified period of emancipation of Montenegrin women granted them a right to vote, but without significant results concerning their participation in decision-making. However, female employment and social safety were on a much higher level than nowadays. The transition period since 1990s exposed women to unemployment and more obvious discrimination in the labor market. What we see today is, in fact, a *re-traditionalization* of the role of women. Women's economic position deteriorated. The labor market offers only limited opportunities for women. After the closure of big factories, a large number of formerly working women again found themselves tied to the private sphere, to housework or the grey economy.

At the same time, the expectations of new generations of young, educated women significantly surpass still traditional societal norms and expectations. The expectations of those young women regarding marriage and family life do not exclude professional advancement and a more vivid social life.

Different conceptions of gender roles among men and women result in more frequent reports of partner violence. We also observe a significant increase in the number of divorces in Montenegro. The country also faces an increasing number of single mothers who are particularly exposed to the risk of poverty, due to irregular alimony, the lack of affordable child care services, and discrimination in access to employment as well as to state support measures and social protection. Given that Montenegro is often considered to be a "problem free" EU candidate, without serious political issues, maybe one of the biggest challenges of the accession of Montenegro to the European Union is to ensure equality of women and men as one of the key conditions of national progress and development.

## **“Fresh Meat” from Southeast Europe for Johns in Germany**

### **A look at the System of Human Trafficking**

Inge Bell

On July 31, 2014, Ioana, a 19-year-old Romanian girl, lay in a hospital bed somewhere in Cologne. She was unconscious, her brain had hemorrhaged, and she had other serious injuries. Ioana’s Romanian pimp had beaten her brutally inside a “model apartment” – an apartment brothel across from Cologne’s Karstadt department store. Her roommates found her and called an ambulance.

Ioana was immediately put into an artificial coma and underwent several brain surgeries over the following months. The longest surgery lasted 14 hours. Her long, dark mane had to be shaved off. Today, Ioana has been brought out of her coma, but only a shadow remains of the attractive and happy girl she once was. Ioana will remain in nursing care for the rest of her life. She is in a wheelchair now and her brain does not work properly. Most likely she will have to stay in Germany for many more years because her Romanian home town cannot offer the care she needs.

Ioana came to Germany in March 2014 at the age of 19. A friend from school who had lived in Germany for many years called her repeatedly saying that she should come and make good money, that she could work in the same hotel as a maid. Her friend promised she would get official papers and an apartment, so she could help her poor family in the small town of Bobolia. Ioana did not want to go at first, she had a young son who was barely one year old. But her family situation was hopeless. As in many provincial Romanian towns, Ioana’s parents had no jobs; they survived on the government support that Ioana received for her son. Determined to put an end to this situation, Ioana followed the call of her friend to come to Germany.

When she arrived in Leipzig – her first stop – she realized a terrifying truth: Her friend was married to a Romanian pimp, Robert T. Ioana had to share an apartment with them and was immediately forced into prostitution with many men every day. In addition, she had to pose for pornographic photos that were sold on the Internet. Her next stop was a brothel in Nuremberg. Again, she had to sell her body. She was allowed to call her parents only in the presence of Robert T, who dictated her answers to them. Her mother grew suspicious when her daughter’s answers sounded robotic, awkward, and broken. She went to the Romanian police and pleaded with Ioana to return home. Then, Robert T. began to threaten Iona’s family, intimidating and insulting them. Eventually, he brought the girl to Cologne and the apartment brothel where the ambulance crew would find her.

Ioana’s case shocked the people of Romania where the story remained in the headlines for months. In Germany, one did not read much about Ioana’s fate, apart from the initial news of the brutal attack. German authorities did not provide the media with any details during the investigation even though Robert T. already was in police custody, thanks to information from his wife, Ioana’s friend. The alleged brutal perpetrator also is wanted in Romania for two murders there. He is being held in Cologne pending deportation but probably will not be handed over to Romania (according to the current information available to Ioana’s family). Meanwhile, three EU countries have banned him.

Ioana’s bitter fate is disconcerting, especially considering the before-and-after pictures of her in the Romanian press and on Facebook. A once beautiful young woman, a blooming beauty, now a picture of misery. One can only wish her and her family all the best in the world.

Ioana’s story is not an isolated case – except, perhaps, for the extreme physical brutality she endured and the extensive coverage of her story in the Romanian media.

Ioana’s case is emblematic of the “System of Human Trafficking” in the second decade of our century. Her case illustrates systemic and structural aspects of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. These include

- perpetrator-victim structures,
- changes in recruitment tactics for trafficking victims,
- the decreasing age of the victims and problems in cross-border prosecution;
- European dimensions of human trafficking that include poverty issues,
- EU eastward expansion, and
- differing legislation across Europe;
- media coverage and awareness-raising processes focusing on the john (prostitution client),
- societal discussion, perplexity and helplessness.

### **A critical look at numbers: Worldwide, Europe, Germany**

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the practice of “human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation” – as the criminal offense is officially called – found its way into Western European countries. Young women and girls from all over Eastern Europe fall victim to ruthless traffickers who promise them the moon – a great job in the West, lots of money, a rosy future – and then exploit them when they get to the West. Even while circumstances have changed rapidly in the fight against human trafficking, one thing has not changed: the speculation concerning numbers. There are few verified reports of how many women and children worldwide, in Europe, or in Germany fall victim to human trafficking and forced prostitution.

There are only estimates, dark figures, projections. However, even these figures are useful for estimating the magnitude of the tragedy.

The latest “conservative” estimates from the ILO (International Labor Organization, 2012) state that 21 million people are victims of human trafficking worldwide. Most of them are believed to be victims of “human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation.” The ILO figures report that 22% of the 21 million (4.5 million) are girls and young women who have fallen victim to “human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation,” meaning forced prostitution. Between 13% and 25% of that number are children.

In Europe, most of them are women from Eastern Europe who fall into the hands of ruthless traffickers. More than 500,000 women from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eastern Europe are forced into prostitution every year, according to estimates by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). East European human traffickers – among them a growing number of women – use duplicitous job offers in Western Europe to lure and then force their victims into prostitution, exploiting them or selling them to other pimps. In fear of beatings and of being penalized by the legal system themselves, the victims surrender to their fate.

Human trafficking is big business. Profits from forced prostitution rank closely behind those made from drugs and weapons. ILO estimates put the annual income for forced prostitution in Western industrial nations at more than \$13 billion.

By way of contrast, in 2008 – just seven years ago – the UNO (United Nations Organisation) estimated that worldwide that there were “only” 4 million people—women and children – who were exploited annually. About 2 million women and girls annually, according to these estimates, ended up as victims for the sex industry. The International Organization for Migration (IMO), however, estimated that about 500,000 women and children were trafficked annually from Mid- and Eastern Europe to Western Europe. All of these estimates have been sitting next to each other for years.

This demonstrates that human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation does not have exact numbers. We are dealing with a crime in a grey and taboo area “Prostitution/Johns buying sex/purchased sexual satisfaction.”

In Germany, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) publishes an annual “State of the Union: Human Trafficking” report – with rather exact numbers about victims and perpetrators in human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Those numbers are much lower than the estimates because they originate from the so-called “bright field,” as the police call the results of their active investigations:

- Between 400 and 1,000 victims per year (most of them originating from the more recent EU countries, Romania and Bulgaria; increasingly younger girls; more and more Roma women and girls)

- between 500 and 800 perpetrators per year (mostly from Germany, but often not native; by now in the second and third place are men from Romania and Bulgaria)
- between 300 and 600 investigations per year.

Here are the current numbers of the German Federal Criminal Police Office for 2013:

- 425 closed investigations
- 625 suspects (among them 28% Germans, 25% Bulgarians, 15% Romanians); 77% men;
- 542 victims (among them 143 Bulgarians, 125 Romanians, 90 Germans); 297 young women and girls under 21 years of age (54.7%); 70 minor girls, some clearly under 14 years of age.

The BKA continuously emphasizes that the dark figure of unknown cases of human trafficking victims and perpetrators is much higher and that their “bright-field” statistics reflect only those instances when perpetrators are brought to the attention of the police. This may come about when johns or employees of aid agencies take victims to the police or the young women go themselves, and when the police go looking for victims, that is during raids or surveillance of brothels, apartments, or on the streets. However, the German Prostitution Act of 2002 dramatically limited these kinds of surveillances, a fact which criminal prosecutors have long bemoaned and which underscores the need for the revision of federal law, now in progress.

When we talk about numbers, we also have to look at the demand, at the places where prostitutes (voluntary and human-trafficking victims) are deployed, including clubs, brothels, apartments, and streetwalker districts.

There are no exact numbers, only estimates and they are very outdated. Information by Hydra, the German professional association of prostitutes, from the 1990s, find that about 1.2 million men use the services of prostitutes daily. These include men of all ages, family backgrounds, every profession, and education level. Other sources estimate approximately 12 million johns and between 400,000 and 800,000 prostitutes. The latter includes the occasional student prostitute or housewife, professional prostitutes, drug addicts, and forced prostitutes). Statistically, it can be assumed that every third man in Germany regularly uses the services of a prostitute. Theoretically, we should therefore have several johns in our circle of friends, family, and colleagues. But who wants to consider uncomfortable issues like that?

The economic sector of the “red light milieu in Germany” is enormous, very lucrative, and still a taboo – therefore barely studied.

With an estimated yearly turnover of 15 billion euro (Federal Statistical Office), the revenue is as high as that of the fabric and clothing industry in Germany. Unlike

the red-light sector, the clothing sector, has been recorded in minute detail. The red-light sector has no market research, statistics, and, therefore, barely any studies about the target group or purchase patterns.

### **Methods of Human Traffickers**

Over the course of the last few years and as part of the Eastern EU expansion, the methods of human traffickers have changed. Organized crime benefits from less restrictive cross-border transfer. The illegal smuggling of young women in cloak-and-dagger operations across green borders or with fake passports have given way to perfectly legal entry. The east expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007 facilitated human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. What happened illegally before is now taken for granted; it is completely legal. Even before Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007, visa-free travel was possible as part of the preparations for their EU membership, a practice dating back to 2001 and 2002. Since then, the number of human-trafficking victims from these countries has increased drastically. Human traffickers profited from the option for women to travel as legal tourists. Once in forced prostitution for three months, their status became illegal, which gave their perpetrators additional leverage over them. They told the women, “You are illegal now, so behave, because if you go to the police you are a criminal and will be deported.” The treachery of this was that the women, as non-EU citizens, actually would be deported if they did not act as witnesses in subsequent legal proceedings. So, in a way, the traffickers were right.

Today, Bulgaria and Romania are the main “countries of delivery” of human-trafficking victims, according to German statistics. This came about very quickly when the two countries joined the EU in 2007. A relatively new trend in this traffic flow is the growing number of Roma girls and women from Bulgaria working as forced prostitutes in Germany. This illustrates that those at the bottom of the social scale in their country of origin are especially vulnerable. They include poor, uneducated girls lacking any prospects and they are often victims of their own clan, which may tolerate violence against them or even sell and enslave them.

The “old” methods of human traffickers have increasingly vanished, replaced by new and more subtle techniques. Until about 15 years ago, ruthless pimps used brutal violence in their home country and essentially abducted the broken girls and women and transported them to foreign countries. That method is disappearing. Recruitment has become much more cunning, as in Ioana’s case. The recruiters – men and women – and traffickers come from the victim’s community. They may be acquaintances, distant relatives or – especially ominous – their own friends. For Ioana, it was the trusted friend from school who lured her into doom with her promise that work in Germany would be honest and well paid for. The same friend may also have been a victim of her husband, the pimp Robert T. Presumably she also fell for the “lover-boy” ploy. When admirers and close friends lure victims into

forced prostitution, experts in prosecution or aid agencies call it the lover-boy syndrome: Young men with nice cars and lots of money make the girls in their hometown fall in love with them, make them feel like princesses for months and then say, “You know, I’m in debt with this guy, couldn’t you help me, work in another country for a few months and then we’ll have a wonderful life...” The girls fall for it. The great love is enticing.

I have a personal story. One of my godchildren from Bulgaria, now 29, was forced into prostitution at the age of 13 by her boyfriend. He sold her to another trafficker who brought her by illegal means through Poland into Germany and across the green border with the threat, “If you make a sound, I’ll break your kneecap and leave you in the woods.” The girl was forced into prostitution first in Germany, then France, then Belgium. She has now finally found a normal life. She has a husband, a child, and a job in Bulgaria. This would not have been possible without outside help through sponsorships and the efforts of German aid agencies. Women and girls who are victims of human trafficking usually cannot go back to their families, who may have sold them in the first place, like the Roma clan. Also, in their old community they would be vulnerable again to traffickers or corrupt police who would like nothing better than to get those girls back into the evil cycle of human trafficking. Ioana’s family still receives threats in Bobolia from Robert T’s associates.

Deception of a prospective victim, like Ioana, who was lured away by the prospect of a well-paid job as a maid in a hotel, is not always necessary today. Increasing numbers of young women from Eastern Europe who believe prostitution is OK end up in German brothels. They think, “I’ll make some money for two or three years for my family at home, but on my terms.” Or their alleged friends or lover boys say, “You work in a bar, you dance, wait on guests, but you don’t have to go upstairs with anyone you don’t want. You make great money, have your own apartment, everything will be great.”

When those promises are suddenly and brutally broken as soon as they get to the West, then they become a crime victim. A problem is that the young women and girls do not see themselves as victims. Instead, they tell themselves, “It’s my own fault, I let it happen.” The shame and feeling of disgrace play into the pimp’s hands because someone who does not see herself as a victim will not go to the police. Also, few women in forced prostitution would turn to the police because their experience in their Eastern European hometowns taught them that the police are corrupt and accomplices of traffickers. They think it is the same in Germany.

I helped with a case involving a 19-year-old Romanian woman in an upscale nudist club in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. She was sold there by a Hungarian-Romanian trafficker. First, he told her he wanted only her “sale price” of 3,000 euro back in return for her freedom. Over the course of the following four months, he kept increasing the price, 5,000 euro, 7,000 euro. In the end, he wanted 13,000 euro from her. The young woman would never be able to work off that

“price.” On top of the debt with the trafficker came additional debt with the owner of the brothel: cost for food, shampoo, monthly hygiene products, make-up, underwear, things that were bought for her at horrendous prices. It clearly is a system of bonded labor. The young woman never had a choice. Even if she knowingly and voluntarily went into prostitution in Germany at first, she no longer had that freedom to choose. And this “change of working conditions,” as the German police like to call it, this fraudulent deceit, is human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

### **Push and Pull Factors**

The unobtrusive “goods” in the big business of human trafficking – young white women – come mainly from the poorest countries of Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldavia. In those countries, poverty and the absence of prospects for a brighter future are the push factors. Ioana came to Germany to secure a better future for her little son. She went because she thought she had a trustworthy point of contact, a friend from school, who promised her a good life, a real future. The promise of a happy future is the biggest pull factor people can imagine.

An unimaginable post-socialist dreariness rules many areas of southeastern Europe, an area rife with unemployment, poverty, and anxiety about the future. In Ukraine, a liter of vodka costs less than a liter of milk. In Romania, a liter of milk costs as much as it does in Germany, but, a Romanian teacher or nurse makes only 350 euros per month, if they have a job at all. Retirees have to make ends meet on 90 euros per month with energy prices on a par with the West. How is that supposed to work? It can work only with the help of a tightly knit family, if there is any.

In addition, a decline in values during communist times fostered a dramatic lowering of the threshold of interpersonal violence. Violence within the family, shattered families, violence because of alcohol abuse – a fact of life in Eastern Europe bemoaned by many aid organizations there – led to abandoned or neglected children, parents who work in a foreign country and leave children behind, and children who become victims of violence early in life. A solid education means nothing in post-socialist countries in which predatory capitalism, an elite continuity of old-boy networks, and – more recently – organized crime networks determine the value system.

Poverty, the lack of prospects, the spiral of violence in the home, and the desire to lead a better life motivates girls and young women, gladly and naively, to emigrate west. They do so even though there is public education about human trafficking. At the center of the lover-boy method, the recruitment by friends and relatives, and the promise of a lucrative job is each victim’s belief that “Something



like that won't happen to me!” Their trust in their close environment is bigger than the trust in a poster from their country's ministry of internal affairs.

The biggest pull factor is demand. In Germany's clubs and brothels exists a demand for “fresh meat”: young, luscious, and supposedly “naturally horny” Eastern European women. They are – as the cliché and numerous john forums on the Internet promise – much cheaper, willing, and “warmer” than the very confident German prostitutes. That is attractive. The demand for ever younger and therefore inexperienced women and girls has to be satisfied. Cheap sex, ideally without a condom, is booming. (The practice of “no condoms” is supposed to be part of the past soon. In February 2015, the German government decided to add a clause for the mandatory use of condoms to the prostitution law.) Sister Lea Ackerman, the founder of Germany's largest aid organization for victims of forced prostitution SOLWODI (SOLidarity with WOMen in DIstress), told me recently about a now 18-year-old girl, who was brought to Germany at the age of 15 from an Eastern European orphanage and was sold as “teenager without taboos” at a high-end brothel. “Without taboos” means without condom. The traffickers were sentenced to 16 months' probation – a catastrophe for the girl. To protect her from those pimps, she now will have to be hidden by SOLWODI in Germany for years. She cannot return to her home country. To provide that kind of help requires aid organizations with hearts and hands. SOLWODI, for example, runs about 20 counselling centers around the country, many with safe houses. In all of Germany there are about 60 such counselling centers, but, like the police, the aid workers are completely overstretched and underfunded.

### **Human Trafficking, Prostitution, and Politics**

Over the past 10 years, the perspective of German politicians on perpetrators, victims, and the prosecution of human trafficking has, thanks to the tireless pressure of women's organizations, widened to include the johns, the customers of this business. Customer demand creates a market, says an axiom of economics. Efforts have been made to spotlight customer responsibility, to focus on the johns. Attempts through the German Christian parties, the Christian Social Union and the Christian Democratic Union (CSU/CDU), went in the direction of punishing johns in human-trafficking cases. Even the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Green Party discussed the responsibility of the customers. Aid organizations and clerical institutions launched campaigns. In 2005, the council of Europe's convention against human trafficking recommended taking the punishment of johns in human trafficking cases into international legislature. “Punishing the johns”, has been the cause of widespread malice in john's internet forums and among brothel operators – and even women's rights and aid organizations did not find very desirable –, but now it is being discussed extensively. It has led to a change of course in politics and among NGOs. For example, the women's rights organization Terre Des Femmes

(Women's Earth) now promotes withdrawal from prostitution and punishing johns, which only a few years ago was unthinkable. In February 2015, the German news magazine Spiegel wrote, "Punish the johns!" In the current revision of the German Prostitution Act of 2002, no one mentions the john's responsibility or other attempts to fight human trafficking, but it is not off the table.

The German Prostitution Act of 2002 was supposed to improve the situation of legal prostitutes in Germany (the law does not address human trafficking, since human trafficking is illegal). The law meant to enable prostitutes to pay into social security and sue for their salary. Prostitution was not supposed to be a "job like all others," but almost. Subsequent evaluation showed that both demands failed. Instead, the media, NGOs, and politicians complain that Germany turned into the "biggest brothel of Europe" and brothel operators and pimps now have full reign over starting and running their houses of amusement. In reality, the law placed a strong limitation on the audit and control capabilities of police in cases of possible human trafficking. Agents of the criminal investigation department specializing in human trafficking quietly complain that during prosecutions their hands are tied by the new law. Again and again, the prostitution law has been associated with an increase in human trafficking. Constant dripping wears the stone: In February 2015, the German government finally made improvements and agreed on a new prostitution law. However, many important demands for a real improvement in the situation of prostitutes and progress against human trafficking were not complied with, which is why meddling with the law is seen as a lousy compromise. The demands that remain unfulfilled are:

- The minimum age was supposed to be raised from 18 to 21 to protect young women from the manipulation by the lover-boy syndrome,
- A monthly health check was supposed to become mandatory, so women in prostitution – especially in the hidden model apartments like the one Ioana lived in – would be seen outside of their milieu at least once a month and could possibly find help,
- A timely and individual obligation to register with the police: especially helpful given the frequent change of residence that prostitutes often go through (to enable a "rotating supply" and "new arrivals" in the brothels), it would be easier to keep track of the women (now women have to appear once every two years and must go through a social and health check once a year – twice as often for women under 21 years of age).

The only CDU/CSU demand that the German government could agree upon is the requirement that johns use condoms (it remains unclear how to enforce such a law). In addition to that, brothel operators now have to deliver proof of dependability. Anyone with a criminal record is not allowed to run a brothel. It is, however, common for stooges or puppets to run brothels for others.

A revision of legislation against human trafficking in Germany has yet to happen. Again, the punishment of the john is being stipulated; the CSU/CDU even wrote it into their manifesto.

Let's have a look at the practice in other countries in the EU and worldwide. In Sweden, it has been forbidden to purchase sexual services since 1999 and johns are punished if they pay for sex, not the women. Sweden is setting an example: Prostitution is not compatible with the equality of men and women. If you were to survey Sweden's population, public opinion about this would be very clear: “No, we do not want prostitution”, in contrast to Germany where, since the passage of the Prostitution Act, prostitution seems to be socially acceptable. The Swedish model is catching on. In 2014, the European Parliament asked its member states in a resolution to follow the Swedish model. Now, it is actually called the “Nordic Model” because Norway and Iceland have followed suit. Northern Ireland also outlawed prostitution in 2015. Looking at France (especially now after the prosecution of Dominique Strauss-Kahn): Procuring women is against the law. And even the oh là là-country is not just discussing punishment of johns, it is working on a law. In 2015, Canada also made it a law to punish johns to put an end to prostitution and human trafficking.

### **Difficult Prosecution in Germany**

As one can tell from current developments as well as from discussions concerning the change of the prostitution law, the law on human trafficking, and the punishment of johns, national and international legislation is shifting/changing. While prostitution in Germany is legal, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a criminal offense, usually one of organized crime. And, yes, we have laws against it, which have been changed and refined frequently over the past 15 years to make human trafficking more traceable. However, the underlying problem is that human trafficking is hard to prove because it often requires international cooperation across borders to uncover networks. It also requires statements from victims. Ioana's case is a case in point: The perpetrator is from Romania, his criminal network is there, but it is also in Germany because he was able to move Ioana between apartments in Leipzig, Nuremberg, maybe elsewhere, and finally in Cologne. That requires local sources.

To catch locally and internationally well networked perpetrators, the German criminal police department must rely on the cooperation of authorities in the country of origin, in this case Romania. For investigatory reasons, we cannot go into greater detail about the case of Ioana and Robert T. As noted, Robert T. is in custody in Germany. It is doubtful there will be any statement from Ioana regarding his prosecution. How, then, can anyone put a stop to his activities?

Investigations into human trafficking are tedious. Investigators often need not only idealism, a meticulous nature, and a long wind to prove human trafficking,

they also need an ounce of luck, as in the case of Ioana, where only a statement by her old school friend led to Robert T.'s arrest. The process also requires agents to cope with repeated setbacks. For example, police in Eastern European countries may be corrupt and tip off the targets regarding a planned raid. Another problem is a lack of dependable continuity in government administration; with every new government come new employees. Also, human traffickers and pimps are often able to pay for extremely good lawyers who enable them to escape trafficking charges with only a black eye, a so-called "deal" with the prosecution in which the accused admits to lesser rape and coercion charges and gets out on probation. Such a case will never end up in the statistics on human trafficking. It will be filed under rape or coercion and we are back to the statistics problem within our federal criminal police office.

I want to comment on behalf of our German criminal police officers. There is still much education needed among police officers. There are only very few agencies with expert knowledge of human trafficking, but they are taking it seriously. I remember the statement by a Bavarian officer who was excited about the sentencing of a Bulgarian trafficker. "That guy didn't believe it until the end that he would be sentenced by a court and go to prison," said the officer. "He thought, it would go like it does in Bulgaria: He can get rid of evidence, bribe police officers, make files vanish, and bribe the prosecution. He thought he could influence the outcome in his favour if he bribed the judge. But we don't do it that way."

If women victims of human trafficking are to testify as "victim witnesses," they need to feel secure in that process. Aid organizations can help to bolster their trust and feeling of safety. They also can provide for their lodging and psycho-social care. However, if the victims have to fear deportation to their home country after testifying in a criminal case, which is the case if they are not an EU citizen, they will not be interested in telling the truth. Why should they, if they have to fear for their own and their family's lives? Aid organizations cannot do anything about that. There is a longstanding demand that human-trafficking victims be permitted to stay in country after their testimony, irrespective of their testimony and their non-EU citizenship. Women who have suffered here should be allowed to stay here without being required to sit as victim witnesses, like the so-called "Italian model." Italy allows human-trafficking victims to stay and work regardless of their testimony.

Ioana receives exemplary support in Germany: Aid organizations fought for her while she was still in the hospital. A private individual launched a drive for donations to allow Ioana's mother to travel to her injured daughter's hospital bed only months after the catastrophe. An outpouring of public sympathy for Ioana followed the media coverage and social media discussion of her plight. Ioana, who suffered so much in Germany, was granted a retirement. A onetime donation from the White Ring, a German NGO that provides compensation to crime victims, was used to make small modifications to Ioana's parent's humble home. Her room will

be handicap-accessible when and if she is able to return. The toilet is currently in the yard. The bathroom cannot be called one. However, the most important thing for Ioana’s family now is being able to see their daughter in Cologne. At least for a few weeks – and maybe one day they will be able to bring her son along too.

# Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Deprived, but Successful

Lejla Turčilo and Seid Masnica

## Introduction

Although the war ended in Bosnia-Herzegovina 20 years ago (in 1995 by the Dayton Peace Accord, which is a very specific peace agreement, since its Chapter 4 is actually a Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>), consequences of war and post-war transition are visible in many aspects of the political, economic, and social situation in the country. Many social groups (such as war veterans, elderly people, refugees, and internally displaced persons, etc.) are deprived and need stronger support by both society and the system. One of the most vulnerable social groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina (B&H) are women, who face many difficulties and obstacles present in both their private and their public life. In the private sphere, women in B&H are still struggling with patriarchal structures and relations, and in many cases still fighting for their right to shape their private lives in their own way (which is especially difficult for single women and almost impossible for lesbian women in B&H). In the public sphere, on the other hand, there is much discussion about women rights and about the position of women in society; there are also many projects ongoing (mainly by NGOs) that try to raise awareness on women rights.<sup>2</sup> However, there are still many obstacles that prevent women from exercising their full rights and potentials, including their deprived position in the labour market and political life,<sup>3</sup> as well as urban-rural antagonisms having to do with women's position, etc. Yet, individual success stories of women from Bosnia-Herzegovina give us some hope and reason for optimism, in spite of the current difficult position of women in B&H society.

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<sup>1</sup> Dayton Peace Accords, along with the Constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, can be found at the website of the Office of High Representative in B&H, [http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content\\_id=380](http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=380) (accessed on October, 15, 2015.)

<sup>2</sup> Publications and research on Bosnian women and their private and public life can be found at the website of the Sarajevo Open Center, NGO that promotes women rights (<http://www.soc.ba> accessed on October, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> More about position of women in the labor market can be found in: Miković Milanka, Bašić Sanela, *Rodne (ne)jednakosti na tržištu rada u BiH*, (Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/09705.pdf> (accessed October 15, 2015)

## **Legal Framework and Social Context of Women in B&H**

It is not easy to discuss the position of women in B&H society owing mainly to a lack of reliable statistical and empirical data for in-depth analysis and discussion. There are many research projects on different women-related issues in B&H, and their results help to get an overview of the position of women in B&H society.<sup>4</sup> But when it comes to statistics, it is difficult to get precise data, due to the fact that the census in Bosnia-Herzegovina was held in 2013 and results have not been published yet. The last census was held in 1991 (i.e. prior to the war), and thus most of the data are outdated and no longer reliable. According to preliminary results of the 2013 census,<sup>5</sup> there are 3,791,622 people living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but there is no data about the percentage of women in this number. According to some estimates from 2011,<sup>6</sup> the population of B&H at that time was 3,057,000 and 1,559,000 (51%) of them were women.

Although over the past 10 years the international community has made significant efforts to develop a national legal, institutional, and political framework for the implementation of the principle of gender equality in B&H, unfortunately, there is still no clear strategy and thus gender equality continues to be treated as a women's issue. It has become almost standard practice to discuss "women's rights," "women's quota," and "women's problems" rather than gender equality in the public discourse. In the academic discourse and in higher education, gender equality and gender mainstreaming have found their place (there is a Gender Studies program at the University of Sarajevo, at the masters level at the Center For Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies), but the issue of gender equality is still publically perceived as a "fight for women rights." When it comes to the legal framework, we may say that there is a satisfactory number of laws which are quite good: Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Law on Gender Equality in 2003, the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2009, as well as a Gender Action Plan in 2006. All of them are supposed to lead to a real improvement of status for women in the country. However, still evident are stereotypes and traditional attitudes, customs, and cultural practices that are deeply rooted in the collective awareness of the role of

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<sup>4</sup> These research projects are done by some organizations, such as Agency for Gender Equality (<http://www.arsbih.gov.ba>), Fondacija CURE (<http://www.fondacijacure.org>), Sarajevski otvoreni centar (<http://www.soc.ba>), Centar za ljudska prava (<http://www.hrcunsa.ba>) as well as some individuals/researchers, such as Zlatiborka Popov Momčinović, Amila Ždralović, Sanela Bašić, Lejla Somun Krupalija etc.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bhas.ba> (accessed on January 3, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.soc.ba> (accessed on October 24, 2014)

women in a society where they are seen primarily as mothers, wives and, housekeepers.<sup>7</sup>

The Gender Action Plan 2013-2017 is the newest strategic document adopted by the Agency for Gender Equality. It defines priority and cross-cutting areas that are aimed at strengthening the system, as well as mechanisms and instruments necessary for reaching gender equality. Responsibilities and tasks of different ministries and institutions are also listed and the Gender Action Plan contains three strategic goals (with priorities, programs, and measures that need to be taken in order to achieve each goal). These three goals include: enhancing gender equality in political institutions, improving systems, mechanisms, and instruments to enhance gender equality in the society, and development of cooperation and partnership.<sup>8</sup>

Legal experts agree that laws regarding gender equality are sufficient to provide a good quality framework for developing plans, strategies, and actions to enhance gender equality in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those plans, strategies, and actions are many, but still needed are better coordination among institutions and organizations and stronger support by these institutions and organizations that are working on their implementation.

### **B&H Women and the Labour Market**

Empirical research conducted in 2012<sup>9</sup> proves that discrimination against women exists in the labour market in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The very difficult economic situation in the country causes problems for both men and women when it comes to finding and keeping jobs. Women, however, are burdened with some additional problems, such as working in the grey economy on a lower salary than men, working without adequate contracts, losing jobs if they get pregnant, etc. We identify two main aspects of inequality of women in the labour market: inequality regarding access to the labour market (it is more difficult for women to get jobs than for men) and inequality when it comes to position in the market (women usually work for less pay and in lower positions than men). Figures from 2010 illustrate the gender gap in active employment, with men comprising 66.7% and women only 33.2% of all employees in the labour market in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2011, the employment rates dropped seriously with then 41.3 % of male employed and only 23% of females.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> More about this can be found in Adamović Mirjana et al.: *Young Women in Post-Yugoslav Societies: Research, Practice and Policy* (Zagreb, Sarajevo: Institute for Social Research and Human Rights Centre, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> <http://arsbih.gov.ba> (accessed on January 4, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Miković Milanka, Bašić Sanela: *Rodne (ne)jednakosti na tržištu rada u BiH*, (Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ilo.org> (accessed on January 6, 2015).



Another factor contributing to the gender gap in the labour market is the level of education. For example, a 2015 study by the Sarajevo Open Center states:

Although in Bosnia and Herzegovina, women outperform men in higher education, this advantage is not reflected in the labor market share. Even in the sectors such as education and healthcare, where women traditionally constitute the majority of employees, they are mainly absent from management and policy development structures.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Labour Force Survey from 2014, women comprise 51.6% of the active labour force with primary or less than primary education. Women make up 39% of the labour force with secondary education and 9.4% of those with a college/university degree, master's degree or doctorate.<sup>12</sup> Fully 25% of women have no formal education (men 18%), 11% of women completed only 1-4 years of elementary school (men 6%), 23% of women completed 5-8 years of elementary school (men 19%), 15% of women completed three years vocational high schools (27% of men). Six percent of women have a university degree (BA, MA, PhD) (men 9%).<sup>13</sup> It is particularly discouraging that 15.8% of unemployed women are those with the highest level of educational attainment, the above mentioned study states.<sup>14</sup>

Women face a glass ceiling and their proportion in management and better-paid positions is still low. High-level corruption in the public sector prevents women from accessing certain positions. They are generally better represented in those jobs which are considered as "female," such as mainly supporting and service-oriented jobs such as cooks, cleaning ladies, teachers, nurses, etc. Gender roles in family related fields constitute another disadvantaging obstacle for women. Employers tend to discriminate against women because of possible pregnancy and family planning. There are cases when women have been blackmailed by companies to promise that they will not get pregnant in the next several years in order to get jobs. Younger age, physical attractiveness, and single status are often considered as advantages in getting jobs in the private sector.<sup>15</sup> Women refugees, women from minority groups (Roma for example) or women with disabilities are in an especially difficult situation, not only concerning the labour market, but regarding their position in the society in general. Women in urban areas are in a bit better situation, while in rural areas traditional gender roles are still widespread and women are

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<sup>11</sup> Natalija Bratuljević, Katarina Živanović: *Feasibility Study for the Establishment of Women's Fund in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo Open Centre, September 2015, p. 12 available at: [www.soc.ba](http://www.soc.ba).

<sup>12</sup> Dalila Mirović / InelaHadžić / EditaMiftari: *Annual Report on the State of Women's Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014*, Sarajevo March 2015, published by CURE Foundation and Sarajevo Open Centre.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.soc.ba> (accessed on October 21, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> *Annual Report on the State of Women's Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014*, op.cit, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Miković, Bašić: *Rodne (ne)jednakosti na tržištu rada u BiH*, pp 168.

confronted not only with difficulty just to find jobs but also to take advantage of any self-employment opportunities. Women in rural areas also are challenged by bias and stereotypes that as women they should not work at all, but rather stay home and be mothers and housewives. They have been neglected overly long as an active participant in the development of the rural area. The government in the Serb Republic recently approved the “Action Plan for the Improvement of the Status of Rural Women in the Serb Republic of 2015.”<sup>16</sup>

Finally, we conclude that the transition processes from socialist to market economy and democracy, the end of the socialistic system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the establishment of different new social and economic relations (privatization and market economy) were not beneficial for women and their position in the economy and the labour market. To the contrary.

### Political Representation of Women in B&H

The Law on Gender Equality foresees a gender quota of 40%. According to the results of general elections held in 2014, all political parties did respect this legal obligation and women accounted for at least 40% of names on the candidate lists (in the Federation of B&H, women accounted for 43.6% of the candidates on lists).<sup>17</sup> The Central Electoral Commission of Bosnia-Herzegovina<sup>18</sup> did not approve any of the candidate lists on which women did not comprise at least 40% of the candidates.<sup>19</sup>

Only 23.8% of the members of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia-Herzegovina are women, which is slightly lower compared to the European Union average (25.3%). Nevertheless, there are signs of improvement concerning women in the Parliamentary Assembly: Four women, who were previously elected in 2010, were re-elected in 2014. In the entity parliaments, women deputies make up 19.7%. Their share in the Parliament of the Federation of B&H is 21.4% (an increase of 4 % in comparison to 2010) and in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Serb Republic 15.6% (a drop of 7.6% in comparison to 2010). On the cantonal level, women comprise 18.5% of the representatives.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gender Centre of Republika Srpska: *Akcioni plan za unapređenje položaja žena na selu u Republici Srpskoj do 2015. godine*, 2012. available online at: <http://www.starip.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentars/media/vijesti/Documents/Izvjestaj%20o%20sprovodjenju%20Akcionog%20plana%20za%20unapređenje%20položaja%20žena%20na%20selu%20u%20Republici%20Srpskoj%20za%202011,%20lat.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://infohouse.ba/doc/Zastupljenost-zena-u-politici.pdf> (accessed on October 15, 2015)

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cik.ba> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> [http://soc.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mapa\\_Politicka-participacija\\_Editna\\_Knjizni-blok\\_Zastampu.pdf](http://soc.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mapa_Politicka-participacija_Editna_Knjizni-blok_Zastampu.pdf) (accessed on October 15, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.arsbih.gov.ba> (accessed on January 8, 2015).

In 1997, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) initiated a change the electoral rules and regulations in Bosnia aiming to enhance women's participation at all levels of governance and on political party lists. One of the core provisions was the introduction of a 30% quota of women candidates on the political parties' lists. What happened in 2000 is quite an interesting phenomenon. Yes, the percentage of women in the B&H House of Representatives jumped from 2% in 1996 to 26% in 1998, and the number of female representatives at the municipal level increased from 5% in 1997 to 18% in 2000.

Yet, the introduction of the new electoral system with open lists in the General Elections in 2000 (lists in which every voter can vote for a party or individual candidate whose name is listed directly on a ballot) in fact decreased the chances for women (especially in rural areas) to be elected. This was due to the fact that the political parties put women candidates lower on the ballot than men candidates (only 20.3% of women candidates for Parliamentary Assembly of B&H were listed higher on the list than was prescribed by law as a lowest possible position. Also, there is a tendency among the population not to vote for women candidates. SBB was the only political party whose women candidates achieved better results than their men colleagues in the elections)<sup>21</sup>

A remarkable new step forward took place in the General Elections in 2014 when, for the first time in B&H, a woman, Željka Cvijanović from the political party *Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata* (SNSD), was a candidate for membership in the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina (She finally was not elected, but she will be remembered as the first woman candidate for such a position.) It is worth noting in this context that Cvijanović became prime minister of the Serb Republic in 2013.

Research conducted by the *Association BH Novinari* in 2014 on media representation of female candidates in the general elections<sup>22</sup> demonstrated that women are still underrepresented in the public and political life of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Media partially reflect and partially produce this lack of women in politics by failing to comply with certain journalistic codes of ethics and legal regulations. Although the number of media features directly or indirectly related to elections increased during the pre-election campaign, this trend was not reflected by a respective proportional increase in the coverage and representation of female candidates in the media. According to the analysis, the print media published articles about only 176 of the total 3,276 female candidates from 98 political parties, only 5.37% of the women who were candidates in the 2014 general elections.<sup>23</sup> If Cvijanović from SNSD hadn't been a candidate for membership in

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<sup>21</sup> <http://soc.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/marina-bos.pdf> (accessed on October 15, 2015).

<sup>22</sup> See also: Emina Bečić and Dženana Aladžuz: *Žene u politici – Da li je veličina važna?* (Analiza načina izvještavanja štampanih medija o kandidatkinjama na Općim izborima 2014. godine u Bosni i Hercegovini tokom predizborne kampanje), Association INFOHOUSE. 2014. Available online at: [http://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/zene\\_u\\_politici\\_-\\_da\\_il\\_je\\_velicina\\_vazna\\_-\\_mail-web.pdf](http://ba.boell.org/sites/default/files/zene_u_politici_-_da_il_je_velicina_vazna_-_mail-web.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Emina Bečić and Dženana Aladžuz: *Žene u politici – Da li je veličina važna?*, opit. Cit.

the presidency of B&H, this under-representation would have been even higher. Although her candidacy itself is a step in the right direction, Cvijanović drew all the attention away from other female politicians and created the platform for transmission of inappropriate messages which, it must be said, came more frequently from male politicians than from the journalists (although journalists did use statements from men candidates that included inappropriate gender-based remarks about Cvijanović, and that were included in their articles for the purpose of sensationalism<sup>24</sup>). The under-representation of women in the media during the campaign is also well reflected in the fact that stories about female candidates were presented mainly in poorer journalistic venues in which the space for candidates' professional and political promotion was maximally reduced. On the other hand, as the qualitative analysis of some of the selected examples has shown, female politicians used part of the media space for praising their party leaders and they often shifted to auto-stereotyping, justifying their candidacy by the fact that they can harmonize their family responsibilities with political roles and functions, if they were to be elected.

Among positive trends observed by the *BH Novinari* research was a relatively high usage of gender-sensitive language, especially in print media, which opens niches for further gender-sensitive development of written reporting. Finally, another positive sign was that female politicians could speak about a significant variety of topics, which indicates a certain departure from stereotyping.<sup>25</sup>

The Web portal Radio Sarajevo conducted an interesting profiling of female candidates during the elections in B&H, based on biographies of female candidates and their media representation. Radio Sarajevo found that the average female candidate is 38 years old, graduated from university (BA level), is married with two children, is number 6 on the candidate list and has not been appointed to any political functions so far.<sup>26</sup> This shows that women are not on the top positions of party lists, that parties do not choose women of younger age but prefer candidates who already have family, i.e. fit in traditional gender-roles for women as mothers and thus presumably are candidates that could attract votes.

### **Media Portrait of Bosnian Women**

As mentioned earlier, media not only have an impact on the political representation, but also influence attitudes toward women in Bosnia-Herzegovina generally. Media in a broader context shape public opinion about the role of women; the way they

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<sup>24</sup> Examples available on [http://www.bhnovinari.ba/images/stories/pdf/monitoring\\_report\\_english.pdf](http://www.bhnovinari.ba/images/stories/pdf/monitoring_report_english.pdf) (accessed on January 7, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.bhnovinari.ba/images/stories/pdf/monitoring\\_report\\_english.pdf](http://www.bhnovinari.ba/images/stories/pdf/monitoring_report_english.pdf) (accessed on January 7, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> [http://radiosarajevo.ba/infografike/poslije-onoga/info\\_politicarka.html](http://radiosarajevo.ba/infografike/poslije-onoga/info_politicarka.html) (accessed on October 12, 2014).

portray women also influences how the general public perceives the need to move toward gender equality.

A monitoring of the media in 2012 showed that men were the overwhelming dominant subject of media reports: 75% of the stories on TV, 81% on radio and 76% in the newspapers were about men, not women. The main topics which have dealt with women in the media were about women as victims of violence and about so-called “successful women” (usually those married to wealthy men or those who “manage to have family and career”).<sup>27</sup>

According to 2013 results of research conducted by the Statistics Offices of the Federation B/H and the RS, 47% of women ages 15 and older have been exposed to at least one form of violence.<sup>28</sup> Media coverage of women victims of violence is quite sensationalistic. In rare cases, when sensationalism is not dominant, the media use only statistical data to show some trends, but do not pay much attention to raising awareness on prevention of violence toward women. In general, we may say that media hold a more reactive rather than proactive position on this topic. They cover only some specific cases of violence (usually if there is a case of extremely brutal violence, or if actors are known to the general public). Some actions, mainly by the NGO sector on raising awareness about domestic violence, sexual violence, etc. are covered in the media only in short stories. There are no specialized journalists for this field, so the level of professionalism is very low. Revealing the identity of victims, lack of sensitivity toward victims, non-objectiveness for the purpose of sensationalism are the most common mistakes that media make in covering stories of violence against women.

Between 20,000 and 50,000 women and girls were systematically raped, tortured in concentration camps, and detained in their own homes during the war in B&H, estimates say. Women victims of war crimes and especially sexual violence in wartime are in an especially difficult position in the B&H society and they and their problems are almost invisible in B&H media. The number of cases of sexual violence which have been processed is very low. Victims of sexual violence are still socially and economically marginalized. The legal framework very often deprives women victims of sexual violence of adequate health care. Up to now, the definition (on both the state and the entity level) of acts of sexual violence as a war crime and a crime against humanity is inadequate and not in line with international standards. In cases prosecuted at the local level, witness protection measures are inadequate and there is a lack of measures taken to address the systematic stigmatization faced by women victims of wartime sexual violence (this is directly reflected on their social reintegration).<sup>29</sup> Media rarely deal with these issues and

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bhnovinari.ba> (accessed on September 15, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Gender Equality Agency of BiH: *Rasprostranjenosti karakteristike nasilja nad ženama u Bosni i Hercegovini 2013*, 2013. Available online at: [http://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/studija\\_prevalenca.pdf](http://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/studija_prevalenca.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.fondacijacure.org> (accessed on September 14, 2014).

report on them usually in the case of some trials or protests of women victims of wartime sexual crimes. There are, however, some positive examples of proactive, professional, and well-done stories and documentaries related to this topic, such as the documentary “Unprotected” made by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting<sup>30</sup> or reports by Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN): “Zločin o kojem se ne govori” (Crime one cannot speak about).<sup>31</sup> In general, we may say that women victims of sexual violence are still “numbers,” used to support dominant narratives. Media often follow the agenda set by politicians and are not sensitive toward victims. They are not proactive in supporting and promoting the rights of victims. However, good examples come from media from abroad (Al Jazeera documentaries for example) or from media supported by the international community (BIRN etc.).

Media rarely present success stories of “ordinary” women who achieved some excellent results in the economic, political, or social sphere. But women who are successful in more public professional spheres (such as music, film, journalism, art) receive attention from media and that does help in promoting the idea of Bosnian women as successful and recognized in the country as well as in the international context. Examples of successful women whose stories inspired other women in B&H are: the film directors Jasmila Žbanić and Aida Begić, whose films *Grbavica* and *Snow* received important international awards; the internationally and nationally prominent singer Amira Medunjanin, who sings Bosnian traditional music; the artist Šejla Kamerić, specialized on video art often dealing with the war in Bosnia; and Sabiha Husić, director of the NGO “Medica” from Zenica, BH, who was awarded “Woman of the World in 2014.” However, women from Srebrenica (small town in Eastern Bosnia that survived genocide in which 8,372 men were killed), who managed to re-organize their lives after the war, to step into position of family providers after their male family members were killed, who managed to establish the Memorial Center in Potočari near Srebrenica<sup>32</sup> are only rarely presented in media as successful women. But when you consider that before the war they lived in the very rural area in which male family members were in charge of providing for families and decision making, these women from Srebrenica are successful. This is even more true as they lost so many male family members during the war and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder in many cases, which, after the war, made it even more difficult for them to cope with post-war rebuilding of their own lives and the lives of their families.

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<sup>30</sup> Available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Agfd6AYd\\_RY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Agfd6AYd_RY).

<sup>31</sup> Available at: <http://www.justice-report.com/bh/sadr%C5%BEaj-%C4%8Dlanci/zlo%C4%8Din-o-kojem-se-ne-govori>.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.potocarimc.ba>.

### **Concluding Remarks**

With this general overview on the position of women in the B&H society nowadays, the authors tried to present general data and trends. Specific issues related to the political, economic and social position of women and their media (re)presentation were not discussed. The same applies for activities of various non-governmental organizations related to the promotion of women rights and to women's rights protection. Nevertheless, we hope that with this brief overview of the situation of women in Bosnia-Herzegovina we managed to illustrate the many obstacles and difficulties women in B&H face and how much the post-war and transition society and non-functional political system is putting a burden on women. However, individual success stories of B&H women show that, although women in B&H are deprived in many aspects, they still manage to be successful.

# **Reconciliation / Political Participation and Representation / Lobbying and Regional cooperation: Kosova's case**

Teuta Sahatqija

## **Before the War: Milošević's regime versus Ibrahim Rugova's Peaceful Resistance**

Before talking about any reconciliation process it is necessary to remind on the time of repression and apartheid that Albanians of Kosova faced especially during the time of Slobodan Milošević's regime (1989 – 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Since Milošević has cancelled the autonomy status of Kosova in 1990, Kosovar authorities and institutions were replaced by Serbian ones. In September 1990 up to 12,000 Albanian workers, especially highly educated ones as professors, doctors, managers in social owned companies, were expelled from their jobs. Many of them were forced to flee Kosova or to work as traders in small shops.

Albanian children in Kosova were having school lessons in churches, mosques and private houses while Serbian children were having classes in warm and neatly arranged schools. The overall situation was grim and without any hope.

During that time the peaceful resistance started. It was led by the leader of Albanians in Kosova, Ibrahim Rugova<sup>2</sup> who opposed the regime with peaceful means and explained to the democratic world what was happening in Kosova. The Democratic League of Kosova (LDK<sup>3</sup>) was founded in December 1989 by intellectuals. The LDK was the first democratic party in the region and very soon gathered support by the whole persecuted Albanian population in Kosova.

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<sup>1</sup> Slobodan Milošević - former president of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1997-2000. Under his leadership in 1989 The Constitution has been changed and the Autonomy of Kosova has been suppressed. Milošević was indicted in May 1999, during the Kosovo War, by the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for crimes against humanity in Kosovo. Charges of violating the laws or customs of war, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions in Croatia and Bosnia and genocide in Bosnia were added a year and a half later. The charges on which Milošević was indicted were: genocide; complicity in genocide; deportation; murder; persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds; inhumane acts/forcible transfer; extermination; imprisonment; torture; willful killing; unlawful confinement; willfully causing great suffering; unlawful deportation or transfer; extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly; cruel treatment; plunder of public or private property; attacks on civilians; destruction or willful damage done to historic monuments and institutions dedicated to education or religion; unlawful attacks on civilian objects.

<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Rugova - Historical Leader of Albanians in Kosova. First President of the Republic of Kosova. President of the first and oldest political party LDK, Democratic League of Kosova.

<sup>3</sup> LDK- Democratic League of Kosova, member of EPP European Peoples Parties: [www.ldk-ks.eu](http://www.ldk-ks.eu)



The time also marks the shift towards empowerment of women. Many women have been actively participating in the peaceful resistance. The civil resistance gave hope for a new democratic life in the future, for a break with the traditional patriarchal tradition and for a new role for women in the society. At the beginning of 1991, the sacked radio journalist – Afërdita Saraçini-Kelmendi – called an hour-long silent demonstration in which more than 1,000 women took part in Prishtina, carrying posters demanding ‘Stop the Violence’. This represented a new step in women organizing themselves in Kosova<sup>4</sup>. Many active women were sent to prison and / or faced atrocities of the Yugoslav regime of that time<sup>5</sup>.

### **The War 1998-1999**

There is no war without a lot of pain, death, blood, expulsion of population, tears. The war in Kosova was the latest of four wars during the Milošević regime. It was a short one, in comparison to the Bosnian war, but not less destructive and bloody. During the war 13,535 were killed or disappeared; 20,000 women were sexually abused<sup>6</sup>; around 800,000 people were expelled from their houses and sent out of Kosova (famous “Horse shoes” operation<sup>7</sup>), houses, cultural and religious heritage were burned and destroyed. Up to January 2015, 1,886 persons are still missing and their families still do not have any information about the fate of their beloved ones<sup>8</sup>. Gjakovë, in the Southeast of Kosova and close to Albania, was the most damaged town where the Serb military and paramilitary forces committed the gravest and biggest atrocities as killing, burning, raping.

### **After the War and Reconciliation**

After the war there were so much devastation, pain, tears, sorrow and rage. Fortunately there was hope also; hope to start again in freedom and to build new life. Reconciliation is never easy job. Even more than 16 years after war, in places, like Gjakovë, that were severely affected by war crimes, the wounds are still fresh. When in January 2015 a bus was carrying about 40 displaced Serbs to Gjakovë, these Serbs were attacked by stones during their visit at the Orthodox Church for

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<sup>4</sup> Kendra L. Koivu and Claire M. Metelits: Order and Discord in Post-Conflict Kosovo, Challenges to Democratic Governance in New Democracies in CEE and the Balkans 10-11 October 2008; [www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/](http://www.kellogg.northwestern.edu/)

<sup>5</sup> For more information on that period in Kosova see for example: Howard Clark: Civil Resistance in Kosovo, Pluto Press London 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Nataša Kandić: Kosovo Memory Book Database (KMB); Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo (HLCK), 2015. [www.hlc-rdc.org](http://www.hlc-rdc.org).

<sup>7</sup> “Bulgaria ‘Leaked Milosevic Ethnic Cleansing Plan’”; Balkan Insight 10 January 2012; <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bulgaria-leaked-milosevic-ethnic-cleansing-plan>

<sup>8</sup> <http://balkanwitness.glypx.com/KosovoCasualties.htm>

pilgrimage there. The incident happened because people thought that part of the Serbs in the bus are war criminals from Gjakovë. Albanians who are still missing persons gathered in front of the church to protest because Serb authorities in Belgrade still do not cooperate and do not provide any information about killed and missing persons so far. Some out of the crowd stoned the bus. Aleksandar Jablanović, that time Minister of the Kosovar Government of local community and refugee issues, called them “the savages” and later said that he isn’t familiar with any massacres taking place in Kosova, which triggered protests of victims’ families and others, seeking for Minister Jablanović’s resignation<sup>9</sup>. It is worth mentioning that The Church in Gjakovë and the priests are safe and nobody insults or endangers them in their daily life.

The bilateral trade between Kosova and Serbia, in fact never stopped. Today, the Serb community in Kosova participates normally in everyday life. They are members of the parliament and of the government of the Republic of Kosova. Nine out of 38 municipalities of Kosova have Serb mayors (Serb majority municipalities in the South of Kosova: Gračanica, Štrpce, Novo Brdo, Parteš, and Ranliug; in the Northern part of Kosova: North Mitrovica, Leposavić, Zubin Potok, Zvečan)<sup>10</sup>. Although 92.9% of the population in Kosova are Albanians and minority communities only comprise around 7% of the total population<sup>11</sup>, the official languages in Republic of Kosova are: Albanian and Serbian and in official use is Turkish language as well.

There is an active NGO sector in both countries cooperating with each other, many of them aiming at connecting people from Serbia and Kosova:

One of them is the *Youth Initiative for Human Rights* (YIHR)<sup>12</sup>, which is very active in building bridges between Kosova and Serbia. Young people across the Balkans and from different ethnic backgrounds, regions and countries are working together to enhance mutual trust. They are visiting each other, are participating and organizing conferences and building links. They are meeting with other

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/wave-of-fury-pushes-kosovo-to-the-edge>

<sup>10</sup> Marko Prelec and Naim Rashiti: *Serb Integration in Kosovo after the Brussels Agreement*, Balkan Policy Research Group, 19 March 2015, p. ii: “Kosovo’s Serb community can be divided into three distinct groups. Northern Kosovo is a homogenous Serb area that resisted Pristina’s authority since 1999; many of its residents have little or no experience with Albanians or the Kosovo government and view both with fear and mistrust. Serbian institutions were, until recently, the only governing bodies in this area. The second group comprises six Serb-majority municipalities scattered throughout the rest of the country; most Serbs here comply with Kosovo law but are on the Serbian payroll in one way or another. The third group are Serbs living in scattered villages and neighbourhoods elsewhere in Kosovo”.

<sup>11</sup> Kosovo Statistics Agency: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/eng/> European Center for Minority Issues [http://www.ecmikosovo.org/wp-content/Publications/Policy\\_briefs/2012-12\\_ECMI\\_Kosovo\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_-\\_Minority\\_Communities\\_in\\_the\\_2011\\_Kosovo\\_Census\\_Results\\_Analysis\\_and\\_Recommendations/eng.pdf](http://www.ecmikosovo.org/wp-content/Publications/Policy_briefs/2012-12_ECMI_Kosovo_Policy_Brief_-_Minority_Communities_in_the_2011_Kosovo_Census_Results_Analysis_and_Recommendations/eng.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> YIHR- Youth Initiatives for Human Rights: <http://www.yihr.org/>

organizations, institutions, political parties of Kosova and of Serbia and of other countries in the region. Representatives of YIHR were many times my guests in my LDK party premises and in the Parliament of the Republic of Kosova.

The think-tank *Democracy for Development (D4D)*<sup>13</sup> based in Pristina has a series of interethnic activities, among them to foster cooperation between business women from Kosova and Serbia. I was invited as a speaker at several of these conferences. One of the latest took place in Prishtina end of September 2014. The event was entitled “Empowering female entrepreneurs in the promotion of business opportunities between Serbia and Kosovo” and gathered around 90 businesswomen from Serbia and Kosovo.

The *Council for Inclusive Governance (CIG)*<sup>14</sup> promotes inclusive governance and gathers politicians, civil sector decision makers at high-level conferences, all of the aiming at fostering interparty cooperation, interstate collaboration and facilitating ways to come to common solutions. In January 2015 the CIG among other activities has organized the third roundtable for members of parliaments of Kosova and Serbia.

More on the *Women Parliamentarian Cross Party Caucus* and “the Budva Initiative” see below.

### **Political participation and representation of women in Kosova**

It is worth to mention that there were a lot of women active in political life during the peaceful resistance led by late President of the Republic of Kosova, Ibrahim Rugova. Women were also active during the war. But when this difficult time of peaceful resistance and war passed and time of peace came, the number of women in politics, especially in decision making decreased.

Kosova experienced many kinds of transitions: transition from socialist economy to market economy, from a patriarchal to a modern mentality and to an attempt to accept women as equal partners, from a war torn country to the rebuilding of a modern infrastructure, from a one party to a multi-party system and others. We know that none of these transitions were easy and neither of them is completed but ongoing, though a lot has improved in our life after the war, but more needs to be achieved.

After the war in Kosova each election was conducted in different way<sup>15</sup>. Some elections were held with an open list others with closed. The first elections after the war held in 2000 were municipal elections with an open list, i.e. voters were enabled to support individuals rather than political parties, but without a gender

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<sup>13</sup> D4D Democracy for Development <http://d4d-ks.org/ethnic-relations/?lang=en>

<sup>14</sup> CIG- Council for Inclusive Governance <http://www.cigonline.net/>

<sup>15</sup> Information for every election after the liberation can be gathered from web site of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kosova: [www.kqz-ks.org](http://www.kqz-ks.org)

quota<sup>16</sup>. The result was devastating - in almost all municipalities there was only one single women municipal councilor. Only eight percent of the seats in the municipal assemblies were won by women<sup>17</sup>. Prishtina, the capital city of Kosova, was an exception. Prishtina is a university city, the administrative capital and its citizens are the highest educated in Kosova. There, in the municipal elections of 2000, eight of total 51 municipal councilors were women. In entire Kosova, however, there were no women mayors elected. It is worth mentioning that in all municipalities elected LDK women represented the majority of female councilors. In Prishtina women from several political parties were elected in the municipal assembly.

After many requests from women politician and civil society organizations, The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) agreed to apply a gender quota system in Kosovo in October 2000 for the first self-government elections. Since the municipal elections of 2002, which were based on a closed list, a third of the candidates are determined on gender basis.

Elections were held with either open or closed lists, as already mentioned earlier. The way, how elections have been conducted had an impact on the representation of women. In this respect the NDI Gender Assessment Report states:

“Since 2007, Kosovo has had a system of open party lists, in which voters can vote for a party as well as select specific candidates named on enumerated party lists. In the parliamentary election, voters can vote for up to five individuals through a preferential ballot, and can vote for one individual in municipal elections. Over time, more women have been elected through the preferential ballot, signaling greater public support for women candidates”<sup>18</sup>.

General, municipal, and mayoral elections were held in November 2007. From that time on, a 5 % threshold was established for Albanian political parties to gain a seat in the Assembly of Kosova. The threshold changed immediately the political landscape of Kosova leaving out of Parliament very active Albanian political parties. Non Albanian political parties do not have to meet the threshold, as 20 seats are granted to the minorities by the Constitution<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> See also: Kosovo: Overcoming Barriers to Women’s Political Participation. National Democratic Institute (NDI), February 2015.

<sup>17</sup> See: Christine Eifler and Ruth Seifert (Eds): Gender Dynamics and of Post-Conflict Reconstruction. Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. et al, 2009, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Kosovo: Overcoming Barriers to Women’s Political Participation. National Democratic Institute (NDI), February 2015, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Constitution of The Republic of Kosovo: Minority community parties don’t have threshold of 5%. These parties have also guaranteed places, described very well in The Constitution of Republic of Kosovo in Parliament, Government, Municipalities, CEC, Constitutional Court, Kosovo Judicial Council, special permanent Parliamentary Committee of the rights of communities.

Table: Number of women in institutions according to different types of elections

Year	Parliamentary Municipal Election	Open/ close list	No.of choices in the open list	Gender quota	No of women in the institution	No of women in government - Ministry/M ayor
2000	Municipal	Open	1	no		0/30
<b>2001</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Close</b>	-	<b>Every 3rd women</b>	<b>34/120</b>	
2002	Municipal	Close	-	Every 3rd women		0/30
<b>2004</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Close</b>	-	<b>Every 3rd women</b>	<b>36/120</b>	2/
2004	Municipal	Close	-	Every 3rd women		0/30
<b>2007</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Every 3rd women</b>	<b>36/120</b>	3/
2007	Municipal	Open	5	Every 3rd women		0/30
2009	Municipal	Open	1	Every 3rd women		0/36
<b>2010</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Every 3rd women</b>	<b>40/120</b>	<b>3/19</b>
2013	Municipal	Open	1	Every 3rd women		1/38
<b>2014</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Every 3rd women</b>	<b>39/120</b>	<b>2/ 22</b>

Source: Website Central Electoral Commission - CEC web page [www.kqz-ks.org](http://www.kqz-ks.org)

The parliamentary elections of 2010 were open list elections, where the electorate had five choices and an obligatory gender quota of 30% has been introduced<sup>20</sup>. 12 out of 40 women MPs won their seats without quota, eight of them were from the LDK.

In the parliamentary elections in 2014, the number of votes needed for men and women in the LDK to become a MP in the Assembly were almost the same: candidates needed more than 7.000 votes to become a member of parliament. In comparison to other political parties, however, women from the LDK had to gain the highest number of votes to become a member of parliament. But even in this situation, most of the women in the LDK won their seats without quota. This was not the case with other parties. In the Democratic Party of Kosova (PDK), for example, women had to obtain around 5.000 votes to win their seats in parliament, while male PDK candidates needed about 10.000 votes. And women from other political parties became MP even with only 1.500 votes - mostly with the help of gender quota. This short description of the elections shows that the Kosovar society - although there is a huge progress in women political representation -, still needs to continue with the quota system until men and women will be perceived as equally worth to be elected by the citizens.

The legal base of gender equality is enshrined in The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, (June 2008), in Article 7.2 "Values":

"2. The Republic of Kosovo ensures gender equality as a fundamental value for the democratic development of the society, providing equal opportunities for both female and male participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and other areas of societal life."

It is further extended in Article 71.2, Articles 101, 104, 108, 109, 114

"2. The composition of the Assembly of Kosovo shall respect internationally recognized principles of gender equality."

In every successive election, the number of women that gain their seats without quota is raising. This is a clear indication that the quota is creating the critical mass of women within institutions. This critical mass is able to start the process of empowering women and of transforming women MPs to equal partners with men MPs. In 2013, Mimoza Kusari from the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) became the

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<sup>20</sup> Today, the General Elections Law in Article 27.1 states: "In each Political Entity's candidate list, at least 30% shall be male and at least 30% shall be female, with 1 candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of 3 candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list". And the Local Elections Law, Article 7.2: "Each candidate list shall comprise at least 30 % certified candidates of each gender".

first woman mayor in Kosova's history; she became the mayor of Gjakovë. Her performance is always part of the top stories in media, however not always as appreciation but many times more as a try to find gaps in her governance.

It has been another important step forward when in April 2011, after a political and constitutional crisis following the November general elections 2010, the non-partisan Atifete Jahjaga on 7 April 2011 became the first elected female President of the State albeit by nomination and as a consensus candidate of the three party leaders (LDK, PDK, AKR). Under her leadership (7 April 2011 - 7 April 2016), women's role in Kosova has advanced. In 2012, she hosted an International Women's Summit "Partnership for Change—Empowering Women," which was attended by 200 leaders (men and women) from Kosova, wider Europe, North America, Africa and the Middle East<sup>21</sup>. The summit's aim was to strengthen cooperation and partnership among politicians, business leaders, policymakers, civil society activists and academics, within Kosovo, throughout Southeastern Europe and beyond. Kosova is the first country in the region that has had a women President of the State. Without entering to discussion related to the way how Atifete Jahjaga became the President, the civilized manner she pursued her Presidency definitely made huge changes in perception of the President's office in Kosova and abroad. Her continuous efforts related to the empowerment of women, her gender sensitivity and gender activities throughout her term of office are outstanding and have set a positive example for future women leaders.

### **Election Law with the gender quota regulation**

The Election Law with the gender quota regulation had and still has a great impact on the empowerment of women. Political parties which want to take part in the elections are obliged, to have at least one third of candidates in the list from different gender. According to the Election Law, parties which do not fulfill this criterion are not allowed to participate in the elections. As a result of the positive measures, women participation in the Assembly even increased during the time from initially 34 to 40 MPs.

In neighboring countries, the respective Election Laws oblige political parties to pay fines if they didn't respect this provision. As a consequence, in Albania, for example, political parties preferred to pay financial fines rather than putting every third in the list from different gender. In another neighboring country, in Macedonia, in the first elections with gender quota it was not clearly determined where in the list candidates of different gender should be positioned. As a result, most of women candidates were placed on the bottom of the list, without having any real chances to be elected. This way of playing around with quota was

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<sup>21</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atifete\\_Jahjaga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atifete_Jahjaga)

hypocrisy and not at all a sincere manner to encourage and to enhance the participation of women in political life.

The Kosovar example is unique and really helps to establish gender balance in parliament and in municipal councils. Regrettably, Kosovo today is not a leading country in the region regarding economic development, the fight against corruption, or concerning scientific achievements. But as concerns women empowerment we as a country achieved quite some results. This makes us proud, and we are open and willing to share our experiences with others as good practices.

### **Political Parties**

The number of women leaders of political parties is still very low. For some analysts “an ‘old boys network’ within and among political parties seems to influence most key decisions in Kosovo; women seldom have access to spaces where decisions are taken”<sup>22</sup>. Usually they are presidents of small political parties with only little influence in political decisions. Fortunately, as a result of a huge campaign there has been progress in that every major political party has a woman deputy leader and a quota for women’s participation. The lack of the Law on political parties gave flexibility to parties that always go in disfavor of women.

### **Women Cross Party Caucus**

The Women Cross Party Caucus <sup>23</sup> of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo was established in 2005 - during the visit of former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Kosovo. Women parliamentarians come together in The Women Cross Party Caucus. It advocates for policies towards gender equality and enables them to set up a gender related agenda while distinguishing clearly between the role of women MPs as party members of their respective parties and their other identity as women without any party differences. It has an Strategic Action Plan and its Board reviews laws from a gender perspective<sup>24</sup>. Women Cross Party Caucus managed to overcome the differences between women MPs, whether there were political party, ethnicity, religion, language differences. Women joined the Caucus

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<sup>22</sup> Ulf Färnsveden, Ariana Qosaj – Mustafa, Nicole Farnsworth: Kosovo Country Gender Profile; Orgut Consulting AB, April 2014, p.16.

<sup>23</sup> International Idea, Ghana- Accra 2012. SOUTH-SOUTH FORUM. INTER-REGIONAL SEMINAR ON WOMEN’S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT. Translating Women’s Participation in Politics into Critical Actions and Influence

<sup>24</sup> See: Ulf Färnsveden, Ariana Qosaj – Mustafa, Nicole Farnsworth: Kosovo Country Gender Profile; Orgut Consulting AB, April 2014. Here on p. 68, footnote 23: “Women’s Caucus (*Grupi i Grave Deputete*), *Action Strategy Women’s Caucus (GGD)*, Prishtina: GGD, 2012[?]. The timeframe and foreseen financing for the implementation of the Strategy are unclear. The Caucus has advocated successfully for more gender sensitive language to be used within the parliament, among other initiatives”.



in the important agenda of gender politics. To my opinion this is the most important achievement of the Caucus.

Is not an easy task in neither Parliament to bring together women of different political parties and of different nationalities to work together; it was not an easy task either in Kosovar Parliament. The overall political and societal environment in Kosova is still affected by the war, by post-war experiences and by lacking proper reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs. Although there have been many positive achievements, the lack of trust and willingness to cooperate even between Albanian parties is still noticeable. But it is good to note, that after three consecutive legislations, and thanks to the efforts of many good will and visionary women, the Women Cross Party Caucus is working.

### **Unifying projects, building coalitions**

In the Women Caucus of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosova women identified common problems, they carefully picked certain topics, and the overall organization of the Caucus improved. Over the time, the women realized that the Caucus was a strong tool for improving their position within their respective political party. One of the projects that helped bridging the differences within the Caucus was the engagement for a Mobile Mammography unit. That project did not only address specific health issues but also succeeded in building coalitions between women, civil society, donors, media and in attracting political participation with the slogan “Women politicians keep their word”. I can say that it was a pure political project with the health component as a joining factor.

All women MPs protested against the unequal representation of women in the diplomatic corps<sup>25</sup> (after independence in 2008 there was not one single female women ambassador) and their protest has shown the positive result that four women became ambassadors. Women also protested and requested the resignation of one male deputy minister when he insulted women politicians; they protested against notebooks with insulting paragraphs against women and they opposed the attempt to remove the quota system. Finally, women politicians boycotted “KLAN TV” because of the sexist approach of this television. All these joint activities have strengthened women alliances and built trust among women.

The “Week of Women” is our BRAND and famous also in many countries, where National Democratic Institute (NDI) is promoting it as best practice. The Week of Women aims to encourage women to become leaders not just in politics, but also in their everyday life among their family and friends<sup>26</sup>. The Week of

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<sup>25</sup> Kosovar Women MPs Boycott Session; BalkanInsight, 19 September 2008  
<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovar-women-mps-boycott-session>;  
<https://www.ndi.org/Kosovo-women-in-media>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/week-of-women-2013>

Women is a big event and jointly organized by the Women Cross Party Caucus and NDI and is becoming the most attractive event for young women in political leadership as well as in other fields. Regional cooperation aiming at women empowerment is also important. Women MPs from Kosova are cooperating with Women Caucuses in Macedonia, Albania and now in Serbia and are helping to set a joint gender agenda.

### **Regional cooperation of Women in Southeast Europe**

The *Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe* (RWLSEE)<sup>27</sup> was founded in 2006 in Zagreb aiming to bring together prominent women from post Yugoslav countries and Albania with the intention to contribute to peace and security in the troubled region. As one of the founding members of RWLSEE I can say that RWLSEE is another regional reconciliation women initiative which brought together women from region, especially women from Kosova and Serbia. In late September 2014 in Saranda / Albania, more than 70 prominent women politicians and civil society activists from across the region came together for an international conference on increasing the role of women in politics, peace and security<sup>28</sup>. The main topic of the conference in Saranda was: "The Agreement between Kosova and Serbia and its implementation". Edita Tahiri, Deputy Prime Minister is the chief negotiator for dialog between Kosova and Serbia, is also the Chairperson of the Regional Women's Lobby of South Eastern Europe, stated in September 2014 in Prishtina:

"Regional Women's Lobby (RWLSEE) is a unique model in the region, which has brought together women leaders from politics and civil society to work together to enhance women's role in key decision-making processes and peace processes at national and international levels. Women are shown as an important factor for building peace and stability in the region, considering their potential and vision to deal more with the future and less with the past, but of course by never forgetting the tragedy which happened in past"<sup>29</sup>

Another important Regional cooperation platform and one of the very important projects of the Women Caucus is the "*Budva Initiative*" now renamed to "Follow-Us Initiative". The Women Cross Party Caucus from Kosova asked the OSCE to facilitate the dialogue between women parliamentarians from Kosova and Serbia.

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<sup>27</sup> RWL – Regional Women's Lobby for peace, security and justice <http://www.rwlsee.org/>

<sup>28</sup> - See more at: <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/10/balkan-women-make-inroads-in-peace-and-politics#sthash.1ZXXjNls.dpuf>

<sup>29</sup> <http://kryeministri-ks.net/?page=2,9,4457>

Its kick-off happened at the beginning of the 4th legislation period end of 2011 aiming to re-establish communication between Prishtina and Belgrade. It is worth mentioning that this process started even before the Brussels Agreement 2013 and the now ongoing official dialogue for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Prishtina, which has been launched and is facilitated by the European Union. At the very beginning it was decided that the first meeting should not take place in one of both countries but to be held in Budva / Montenegro in January 2012.

At the second meeting in June 2013, again in Budva, eighteen women, members of the Serbian women's parliamentary network and of the Assembly of Kosovo Women's Caucus, as well as female representatives of other decision-making institutions and women leaders from academia, civil society and media came together to exchange experiences and identify joint initiatives to foster women's empowerment in all sectors of society<sup>30</sup>. Once more because of the overall political situation, there were not only women parliamentarians participating in the meeting but also women from civil society, university and media.

In October 2014, the "Budva Initiative" took place in Zurich / Switzerland, in August 2015 in Vienna / Austria and in February 2016 in Skopje / Macedonia. It is now renamed as "Follow Us Initiative". In Skopje we agreed to implement joint activities in the following areas: economic empowerment of women, gender in education, and prevention of gender-based violence, political participation and representation of women at all levels, engendering media and the portrayal of women in media and public life, and promotion of dialogue among youth<sup>31</sup>.

I have to say that each next meeting was huge improvement in relations between parliamentarians of both countries. As the incumbent President of Women Cross Party Caucus in Kosova, I am proud to define the most important successes as:

1. creating a stable environment for a joint agenda of women parliamentarians of all parties and nationalities;
2. initiating the creation of the Women Cross Party Caucus in municipalities of Kosova;
3. influencing the creation of Women Cross Party Caucuses in Serbia, Ukraine and in Albania;
4. establishing a dialogue between women parliamentarians of Kosova and Serbia.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.osce.org/serbia/103363>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/222306>

### **Women Civil Society Sector**

The women civil society sector in Kosova is pretty developed and active covering many fields from: economic empowerment-encouraging women to open and develop their businesses; providing judicial expertise for women to receive their rightful heir, fight against gender violence; political empowerment and many other fields.

Civil society and politicians contributed a lot with their expertise to the very modern Constitution of the Republic of Kosova and to legislative provisions to foster gender equality. We have probably the most unique quota system of obligatory minimum 30% of representation at central and at municipal level, even in the open list electoral system. Let me again underline that the quota system created the needed critical mass of women representation in institutions. They are able to make qualitative changes in a gender perspective, changes my country still needs to achieve satisfactory results concerning the position of women in the society.

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This book is a collection of contributions to a symposium which was organized by the Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft) on the topic “Women in the Balkans / Southeastern Europe” and held on 3rd and 4th November 2014 in Munich.

This book reflects on the present situation of women in the Balkans / Southeast Europe which has experienced fundamental changes since the end of the communist / socialist regime and the transition towards a market oriented economy as well as the wars in former Yugoslavia. These fundamental changes and war time experiences have not only implicated disorders in political and social status, but also a backlash in terms of return to patriarchal values as well as to traditional gender relations and hierarchies. A perception of gender roles following traditional patterns and a concept of femininity reducing women to their bodies, open sexism in media, the so called “sex industry” and “women markets” plus the ban of abortion, increased domestic violence and trafficking in women have been combined with neoliberal values, right ideology, neo-patriarchy and the ruling concept of masculinity. On the other hand, women have also used their chance to create their own business, not to forget female subcultures. Women’s participation in decision-making, especially in political parties, and their representation in the public scenery is an important indicator for the degree of their emancipation.

Bringing together women engaged on women’s issues in different areas – from the academia, the Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society, and policy makers – is bound to result in a variety of perspectives and views.



ISBN: 978-3-86688-615-5  
ISBN (eBook): 978-3-86688-616-2



Gabriella Schubert - 978-3-86688-616-2  
Downloaded from PubFactory at 07/11/2019 02:06:12 AM  
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