

Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition



Ambassade van het
Koninkrijk der Nederlanden



Royal Netherlands Embassy

Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation

Council of Europe Information Center

Project: "Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition – becoming a broad basis for personal and institutional change"

INFORMATION SHEET № 1

Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition unites representatives of civil society, institutions, political parties and the media who are willing to work together for achieving real gender equality in Bulgaria.

The Coalition was set up in February 2004, following the successful implementation of projects within the framework of Stability Pact Gender Task Force 2000-2005.

The project "**Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition – becoming a broad basis for personal and institutional change**" received financial support from the Royal Netherlands Embassy Program MATRA KAP.

Project activities:

* **8 Forums** will be held over a period of 11 months, in which the Coalition members will discuss the GENDER ASPECT of important economic, political and social problems, concerning Bulgaria's joining the EU and the respective national and local policies.

Each Forum will focus on one or two issues specified in advance. Reports will be presented, and afterwards discussions will take place, ending with specific proposals to enhance institutional performance. This will lead to:

- improving the level of information and competence of Coalition members;
- creating an environment for joined activities and shared expertise on the issues in question, as well as opportunities for acting as a pressure group.

The results of each Forum will be publicized in an Information sheet.

* **A National Strategy and an Action Plan for co-operation with the media** will be elaborated, aiming to overcome gender stereotypes which currently exist and are reproduced in the media.

The discussions will be held in the conference hall of Council of Europe Information Center, which is also a project partner.

Forum 1 - 10th June 2005

“The Red House” Culture and debate center, 15 “Ljuben Karavelov” St.

A Civic Debate: “Gender Equality Policies in the Election Platforms of Political Parties”

Participants: **Tatyana Kalkanova** – National Movement Simeon II, **Anastas Guerdzhikov** – Novoto Vreme, **Vanya Dobрева** – Coalition for Bulgaria, **Nadezhda Zaharieva** – Movement for Rights and Freedom, **Evdokia Maneva** – Democrats for Strong Bulgaria, **Maria Kapon** - United Democratic Forces.

Bulgarian People’s Union rejected the invitation.

Mediators: Petar Volgin – a journalist for Bulgarian National Radio and Bistra Boneva – coordinator of “Media and Communications” program for “Gender Project for Bulgaria” Foundation.

Agenda: The party platform policies and measures for promoting gender equality in the following hot issues:

- *Bulgarian family*
- *The demographic crises*
- *Reconciliation of family and professional duties*
- *Achieving a balanced gender participation in all levels and spheres of governance*
- *Institutional mechanism to carry out the gender policy*
- *How to put into practice the Act on Protection against Domestic Violence, the Law on Protection against Discrimination and the Law on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*

Debate rules:

Part one: within a time limit of 5 min. each political party or coalition presented the gender equality policies and measures in its election platform. The order of party presentations was determined by lot.

Part two: the audience and the mediators asked open questions, according to the following principles:

- Equality
- Tolerance and debating competence based on specific arguments
- Active participation of both party representatives and the audience – the civil society

The date of the Debate coincided with an interesting international “women’s” event. On 10th June, at the time and place of the debate, the World March of Women and Women’s Global Charter for Humanity passed through Bulgaria. A patch blanket containing artistic quilts prepared by women from each country participating to the March were displayed in the hall of the debate and this brought the unique women’s spirit to the participants.

Over 100 participants, including Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition members, party representatives, experts, NGO leaders, journalists from Evropa TV, Dnevnik online, Radio NET, Darik Radio, Deutsche Welle contributed to the tolerant, committed and highly emotional debates.

The Forum was carried out under the competent leadership of Stanimira Hadjimitova, Director of Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation and the initiator of Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition.

The results of the Debate were publicized in an Information sheet in 1000 copies and were distributed before the National elections.

Brief description of the results achieved at the Debate is contained in the opinion sent to Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation by Genoveva Tisheva, Director of Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation:

“In this letter I would like to express my satisfaction with the first discussion of equality with party representatives. The Debate was very well organized it was obvious that the party representatives simply had to be well prepared, too.

Although it was impossible to avoid competition, as the elections were drawing closer and the parties rivaled each other, interesting ideas were proposed and some promises were made, which, we hope, will be fulfilled. It was obvious that the audience was much better acquainted with the issues in question than were the politicians, and so, further interaction will be necessary. There was some disagreement among the participants as to the way of implementing the adopted legislation. All the speakers focused on executive mechanisms, whereas these mechanisms are often implied in the law itself, and the effectiveness of the law depends largely upon the proper functioning of state institutions.

Some subtle gender-related issues, such as social and family roles, gender education, etc, also remained unresolved. Still, the efforts made by the politicians must be appreciated.

Another issue which was not fully understood was the quota question and the necessity to adopt amendments to the Constitution, so that it could incorporate temporary positive measures for achieving real gender equality. The need to create an institutional mechanism was not well understood.

Once again, it is the NGOs that have to urge the institutions to work on gender equality problems. We hope to have a more balanced cooperation on equal terms with the next Parliament and government. This is the only way to solve gender equality issues”.