

Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition



Royal Netherlands Embassy



Gender Project for Bulgaria Foundation



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

INFORMATION SHEET № 3

Third Forum of Bulgarian Gender Equality Coalition – 11th October 2005

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

THEME: THE EUROPEAN POLICY FOR LIMITATION OF OSTEOPOROSIS

LECTUTERS: Prof. Dr **Lidia Koeva** – endocrinologist, "St Marina" hospital, Varna, and Dr **Masha Gavrailova** – Ministry of Health

PARTICIPANTS: Representatives of NGOs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Patients' Organizations, doctors and experts

AGENDA:

1. Forum opening by Mr Yavor Dimitrov – Vice Minister of Labour and Social Policy
2. Presentation on the following issues:
 - The European measures for the limitation of osteoporosis
 - The National Program for Limitation of Osteoporosis in Bulgaria
3. Discussion and a Call to osteoporosis action on part of the Coalition – letters to the Minister of Health, Parliamentary Commission for Health and Parliamentary Commission for Labour and Social Policy

The October edition of the Coalition Forum was dedicated to the problem of osteoporosis because of 20th October – World Osteoporosis Day, and it was held in partnership with Association "Women without Osteoporosis".

The two lecturers presented the European initiatives in the area of osteoporosis – reports on the disease, an audit report of osteoporosis policy developments and the ensuing recommendations, as well as the project "A Call to Osteoporosis Action" which started in 2002 and was funded by the European Commission. The structures responsible for the development of strategies to combat this disease were also mentioned, and these included the EU Osteoporosis Consultation Panel, The EU Osteoporosis Consultative Council, which is an expert group consisting of 56 political figures and health experts from EU countries, and the EP Osteoporosis Interest Group.

The next item on the agenda concerned the developed **National Program for Limitation of Osteoporosis in the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2010**. Dr Masha Gavrailova presented information about the spread of osteoporosis in Bulgaria. Data about the hospitalized patients reveals that over 92,000 Bulgarian women have at least one vertebral fracture; every year over 4,000 women suffer hip fractures and 800 of them die within a year due to osteoporotic complications; the average period of hospitalization after a hip fracture and the ensuing operation is 30-35 days. Dr Gavrailova made a case about the justification of the Program as well as the measures it envisages and the central and local structures needed for its implementation. She also pointed out the three major Program objectives:

- To set the foundations of a coherent national policy for reduction of risk factors for osteoporosis and enhancing protective factors through the implementation of legislative, administrative and public measures to limit the spread of the disease
- To figure out the exact number of ill people and people in danger of osteoporosis through setting up a National Information System
- To improve the access of ill people and people at risk of osteoporosis to qualified prophylactics, diagnostics and treatment.

During the discussion, the Forum participants brought up the following issues:

- Which are the priorities and the most urgent measures to limit the disease
- The importance of prevention as the most effective way to reduce risk factors
- The Coalition members expressed their willingness to help osteoporosis prevention with advertising activities, as women's NGOs already have a functioning network for coordination and dissemination of information
- The role of patients' organizations – it was pointed out that no decisions should be made without their participation
- Is there rivalry between pharmaceutical companies and firms producing food supplements

At the end of the discussion the Forum participants decided to send a letter of support for the National Program for Limitation of Osteoporosis to the Minister of Health, the Parliamentary Commission for Health and the Parliamentary Commission for Labour and Social Policy. The letter has already been sent and awaits a reply.

The chairperson of Association "Women without Osteoporosis" Aya Lilova made a proposal to set up a Public Committee to support the National Program and to lobby for making osteoporosis a priority in Bulgarian health policy. This public structure will consist of representatives of civil society, NGOs and health experts. The idea evoked diverse debates and was left for additional discussion at future Coalition meetings when there is a more concrete vision about the functions and management of the Public Committee.

The National Program for Limitation of Osteoporosis in Bulgaria, and the letter to the Minister of Health and the two Parliamentary Commissions are available in Bulgarian on the Coalition web site: <http://coalition.gender-bg.org>