

Conclusions Regional Needs Assessment Survey

General Situation of Women's Involvement in Shaping Public Policy

- Old mentality still present in Balkan countries regarding women's role at home and in business. Yet more and more women have access to leadership positions.
- The trend is for women to become more active in business and public life, either by themselves or under a multi-sector or women association umbrella.
- Women are underrepresented in Parliament and Government bodies.
- When getting involved in shaping policies, associations concentrate on :
 1. Gender-oriented, equal opportunities, even quota system (women associations, gender-oriented, EU support and observing EU requirements for the pre-accession phase)
 2. Changing the business climate for women entrepreneurs or equal opportunities at work (through women business associations)

Current Challenges

- Women in the Balkan region face somehow similar challenges common to transitional economies in the EU accession process: unemployment, professional training, access to funding and know-how.
- Women are seldom seen as top leaders of big associations; they fill more executive positions in chambers or associations.
- Types of issues:
 1. related to under representation of women in Parliament and in the local and central governments
 2. related to the capacity of advocating for improving public policies
 3. skills and knowledge about advocacy process;
 4. barriers in conducting advocacy campaigns (leadership, time, resources)

Examples of Advocacy Tools Used

- Events and campaigns
 1. Increasing awareness about a specific issue (round tables, conferences, seminars)
 2. Public debates and other forms of consultation
- Establishing coalitions either among women or multi-sector associations becomes more and more a common practice -increased awareness of the benefits of "speaking with one voice"
- Passing specific legislation recommendations to local, national and international organizations and drafting issue briefs
- Direct advocacy - meetings with decision makers to make their views known and provide input on specific legislation

- Women associations do not get involved on a regular basis in drafting legislation (when they do, the focus is more on social and gender issues)

Current Knowledge and Skills on Advocacy Practices

- If women want to become a strong voice in the region, they will have to focus on the planning phase (strategy, commitment, analysis of resources)
- Associations have the general knowledge about what advocacy is, but they need more skill-building in practical advocacy and advocacy as a process of influencing public policy
- There are enough good best practices in the region which could be looked at and analyzed as successful advocacy campaigns - sharing knowledge and expertise

Balkan - Related Priorities

- General issues
 1. Women leadership (stimulate women participation in all segments of public life)
 2. Specific skills in advocacy process
 3. Women entrepreneurship
 4. Networking & cooperation
 5. Draw EU attention on specific needs of Balkan women
 6. Harmonizing trade legislation in the Balkans
- Gender issues (not the concern of the regional task force)