



CEE NETWORK FOR GENDER ISSUES
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KORČULA SCHOOL 2013
“RECONCILING WORK AND LIFE – CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, BEST PRACTICES AND POLICIES”

30-31 August 2013

Goal:

The objective of 2013 “Korčula School”, in a think tank and informal format, is to discuss political, social and economic choices and possible solutions that can help shape work-life policies and practice in South Eastern Europe, within the broader EU framework, from the perspective of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Messages from the meeting are intended to inform social-democratic, progressive and left party and government policies in the region, as well as PESW and PES positioning on these issues for the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2014.

July, 2013©

The School is financially supported by the Olof Palme International Centre, Sweden

Background

Established in 1994 by the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, the Network and the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity have celebrated in 2013 (Zagreb) its 20 years of political and civic engagement in democracy building in CEE countries in transition. The Network, acting to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, has a strong base, support and engagement from men and women in the European Forum and social democratic (SD), left and progressive political parties in Europe.

The Network mission is to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality objectives into mainstream strategies, policies and programs of center-left, progressive and social democratic political parties in transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe. To achieve this goal, the Network has established strong partnerships and cooperation with feminist organizations, women's NGOs and movements, trade unions, the academia and international and regional organizations.

The first Korčula School" was held in September 2012 with the topic "Political, Economic and Social Challenges in South Eastern Europe – Impact on Gender Equality". Participants from the region as well as their counterparts from other parts of Europe formulated a set of messages (Annex 1) which were subsequently shared with political leaders of social-democratic and progressive parties in the region and with PES and PES Women leadership.

2013 Korčula School is organized by the CEE Network for Gender Issues in collaboration with the Center for New Initiatives (Zagreb, Croatia) and under the financial sponsorship of the Olof Palme International Center (Stockholm, Sweden).

Objective and focus areas

The objective of 2013 "Korčula School" is to focus on lessons, experiences and possible solutions that can help shape work-life policies and practice in South Eastern Europe. Participation from a number of EU countries will also provide an EU perspective, while participation from PES and PESW will contribute the political, economic and social policies and measures advocated by the group on these issues.

To quote the **Croatian Government Ombudswoman** report (p44) "not enough efforts have been put into facilitating the harmonisation of family and professional responsibilities of women". Moreover, the review of existing literature shows a serious lack of statistics and information on policies regarding reconciliation of work and life.

The current economic crisis with serious consequences for the employment of women is also eroding the social welfare basis of the European post-Second World War model. This is the time to be innovative and bold in establishing robust and sustainable work/life policies for the next generations, as well as to formulate new and forward looking child care options. Creative approaches are needed to "balance" work responsibilities and the changing personal and family commitments of working men and women in changing economic and social circumstances of public support through employment and family policies, as these issues are directly affected by employment and social policies that will govern the first half of the 21st century. The way out of the crisis also demands aggressive, sound and sustainable, gender sensitive employment policies.

Participation of women in the economy is key to economic growth and social stability. The status of women of reproductive age in the economy and in employment is also crucial. The way out of the

economic crisis and the achievement of more sustainable economic growth rests on sound economic policies that are not at the expense of social welfare and wellbeing and that do not undermine the future of Europe. Nordic countries, for instance Sweden, have managed to resolve the tensions around birth rates and child bearing through positive measures such as family support policies and particularly those directed at reconciling work and family such as well paid parental leave and public child care facilities. In 2009 Denmark, Finland and Sweden had the highest female employment rates and the highest birthrates in Europe. In the EU family policy expenditures in relation to the GDP 0,73% in Poland to 2.82% in Germany and 3.92% in Luxembourg.¹ Of the 18 countries below EU average 15 are in either Eastern or Southern Europe.

The EU stipulates, for instance² that “ Parental leave is an important means of reconciling work and family life and promoting equal opportunities and treatment between men and women (preamble). Men and women are assigned an individual, non-transferable right to parental leave on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child for at least three months, until a given age up to 8 years. After the leave the worker should have the right to return to the same or an equivalent job (clause 2). Finland, Denmark and Sweden through their “social-democratic model³ are providing universal state support for families with a strong commitment to gender equality. Germany, Austria and Ireland with a more conservative approach provide employment related state support with a more traditional approach to gender. The UK through a liberal model provides for needs only and low level support to parents relying strongly on the private sector, e.g. in childcare facilities. Family policies in South Eastern European countries, e.g. Italy, Spain and Portugal, are characterized by low level support both in cash benefits and services with a high mix of universal public and private benefits (Blum 2012). Eastern European countries, EU members have opted for a mix of the above policies.

Research demonstrates that policies aimed at assisting parents in reconciling work, private and family life may actually stimulate both women’s participation in the labour market and fertility, providing an additional channel to reduce the burden of financing a growing number of older people imposed on future generations⁴ European Union statistics indicate that women in the EU in the 25-44 age category remain the bearers of family life and caregivers three times more than men in terms of hours spent.

Unfortunately, statistics on the number of women that do not seek employment due to family responsibilities are not easy to find. This can be done through a judicial welfare state mix of positive measures – flexible employment policies, family allowances, parental leave and childcare facilities. In Sweden for instance, parental leave is 480 days out of which 60 days are reserved for the father and 60 days for the mother and the rest can be taken by either. A cost benefit analysis between the Swedish and German model points out that the Swedish model is not much more costly...

Below are some responses to the questionnaire prepared by the CEE Network in preparation for the Kočula meeting that demonstrate efforts by the political parties on the left to prompt governments to address this issue, as well as some information⁵ e.g. Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia, from official documentation, namely:

¹ FES, Sonja Blum, Family Policies and Birthrates: Evidence and Challenges for European Countries, March 2012/No. 14

² Directive 96/34/EC

³ Espin-Andersen typology of three models – while imperfect can provide an insight into different structural responses

⁴ Sleebos, 2003

⁵ The examples are for illustration only and not exclusive

1. The **SDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina** mentions in its Party Program maternal and paternal leave and the B&H Parliament adopted, last year, on the same agreed by all the parties in Parliament. Unfortunately, the law applies only at the state level, while the majority of employees are at the entity or cantonal levels. In the latter case, maternity leave is not regulated throughout all the cantons where there is a lack of both resources, e.g. in spite of a regulation on maternal and paternal leave there are no resources to back it up, and regulation including the introduction of new legislation.

The SDP Women's Organisation is active in raising these issues, last but not least, within measures to address the unemployment of young mothers and support to organized child care and care for the elderly that has been of particular concern to the SDP in terms of reconstructing and reorganizing pre-war facilities for the elderly.

2. Data show that women in **Montenegro** are less present in the active population which means that they are less employed than men. They are still those who primarily take care of a family, children, elderly and sick members of a family. In a situation where support services for a family are lacking, women are those who are facing challenges to be present equally as men at the labour market.

The Labour Law (amendments adopted in 2011) in Montenegro envisages both maternity and paternity leave. Maternity leave may be used by a mother starting 45 days before delivery and paternity leave may be used by mother or a father lasting 365 days from the date of child birth. Parent using this right is entitled to the same salary as while working and is entitled to be positioned at the same working position or adequate one with the same salary. This provision very much contributes to the more balanced distribution of obligations between women and men when it comes to taking care of a child. However, this right is not still used by fathers in a way it should be, but the data show that there is an increasing number of fathers in the past decade using the right to paternity leave.

Even though in Montenegrin Labour Law there are provisions related to the part time job and flexible working arrangements this is not used in the practice. The full implementation of these provisions would assist women to be more active at the labour market. In addition, lacking of sufficient child care and other services for the family prevent women from being more active since in Montenegro there is still an opinion that woman should primarily take care of the family and children.

Engagement of gender mechanisms (Government and Parliament) in cooperation with other institutions and NGOs have resulted in changing to the laws. However, challenges remain in terms of overcoming stereotypes and education of citizens on the position and status of women in all spheres of social life.

3. In **Serbia**⁶, the percentage of employed women is significantly lower than that in all 28 EU member states and including Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria. Low educational levels, as well as low level of skills and expertise, as well as insufficient inclusion in government employment schemes especially reduces employment chances for women and youth particularly in the rural areas.

⁶ Republic of Serbia, National Employment Strategy 2011-2020, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 37/2011

Women remain the most vulnerable group in the Serbian labour market. In spite of the fact that they represent half of the country's labour force, they still remain a minority in the labour market and an even more marked minority among the employed population. In April 2010 there was 40,2% of employed women in relation to 54,3% of men, in spite of the fact that this ration was reduced in the 2005-2010 period. It is interesting to note that if analysed according to gender, the employment of men above the age of 15 contracted by 9,8% in comparison to the rise in the employment of women by 1,6% in the period 2005-2009 which attributes to the rise of women's employment to 43,1% in 2009. This trend affecting differences between genders is most probably the consequence of the contraction in certain economic fields employing primarily men e.g. construction, industry in relation to sectors in which are mostly employed e.g. education, trade/commerce, health.

2010 marked a negative population trend in Serbia by 0,61%, as the result of reduced birth rates and the continuation of economic emigration resulting from the economic transition and limited employment opportunities.

The Serbian development strategy acknowledges that women remain a vulnerable social category and it speaks to the difficulties in targeting women's employment due to their heterogeneity .i.e. the need to prepare new custom tailored employment programmes especially for marginalised women who are discriminated at various levels so that their diverse vulnerabilities are addressed. Finally, Serbia aims to develop the principle of flexi-security through linking the quality and dignity of labour and through an optimal use of measures to stimulate and sanction employment, including the respect of international standards and reconciliation of professional and personal obligations, the promotion of active aging and equality between men and women. The Serbian development strategy has a special section dedicated to equality between men and women (2.4.3).

A better application of the principle of flexi-security in the private and public sectors would decrease the divisions within the labour market and would help balance work and family life. The existing Labour Law offers the possibility of "flexible" employment contracts but this remains still an unused measure. Much needs to be done together with social partners to enforce this legal measure. Part time work would also allow women with family care responsibilities more time and possibilities for employment, which could result in higher birth rates too. This would especially benefit higher educated women (women have higher levels of education than men) to work from home and balance professional and personal life.

The **League of Socialdemocrats of Vojvodina** first points out to the inequalities in Serbia regarding this issue, e.g. while in Jagodina (central Serbia) compensation for pregnant women is 100% of their salary, the compensation in Novi Sad (capital of the province of Vojvodina) amounts to 65% of their salary. In their manifesto and call to action, the League and its women's organisation point out that:

"A century ago, women have gained not only the right to vote but also the right to work and professional education and elimination all discrimination based on gender. A hundred years after this we are still fighting for equality!

- That our working hours are adapted to our responsibilities and needs
- that we are evaluated and compensated for our work in the same way as men
- that compensation for all pregnant women be equivalent to 100% of their salary

- that every woman be protected from the whims of the employer and that she can fulfill the constitutional and legal right to work and employment
 - that others do not make decisions on our behalf but that our voice is heard and respected
 - that we decide ourselves on our health, career, education and life
 - that we create politics, new opportunities and have equal chances”
4. Similar as in Serbia, the **Social-democratic Union of Macedonia**⁷ in its manifesto “We have the Solution”, while not explicitly addressing the issue of reconciliation of life and professional responsibilities, speaks to the need to establish flexibility in working hours and free time for all employed, arguing that Macedonia should respect and implement the highest possible international labour standards. The argument is that flexibility in working hours is in line with technological and scientific development and would actually increase employment levels. The Social-democratic Union of Macedonia managed and contributed to the passing of the new Labour Law, based on European standards, containing many articles that relate to the status of women workers. While the labour market in Macedonia is equally unfavourable for men and women, women are still inadequately represented (37,2% employment rate among women), with a 40,4% of unemployed women. There are limited opportunities for flexible and part time work for women and there is no law on parental leave. There are no measures to reconcile family and professional life for women. To make things worse there is a rising conservative trend advocating women’s role as that in the family and home.

The Social-democratic Union of Macedonia, through its Women’s Club has formulated its responses and demands:

- Revision of labour law from the perspective of protection of women worker rights;
- Strengthening of the status of women in the labour market through the establishment of new employment policies, to conform with the labour market and its specificities;
- Establishment of special employment policies for the vulnerable women groups who have difficulties in finding employment (women who have not found employment for a long period of time, women of 55 years of age, young women, young women, women with special needs, women with low levels of education);
- Openness and accessibility to employment for all strata of citizens;
- Policies which will target trends that would give women only low paid jobs;
- Sanctioning employers who discriminate against women due to their family status or desire to establish a family;
- Inclusion of parental leave in domestic law;
- Changes and amendments to the legal regulation stipulating gender equality and its harmonization with European legislation;
- Amelioration of cooperation with Trade Union women’s organisations;
- Prevention and measures against all forms of violence against women;
- Strengthening the network of family and social support.

The 2013 Korčula School will, therefore, analyse the interface between opportunities and challenges of women’s and men’s employment and strategies and policies to reconcile their private and family life. The focus group will be women and the focus topic will be the impact these policies have on their economic and social status, employment opportunities and wellbeing, as well as that of their families by reconciling work and family life.

⁷ Social-democratic Union of Macedonia, Women’s VClub, “Women and the Solutions for Macedonia”, at the occasion of 10 year anniversary

The meeting will also review options and solutions to establish work-life balance, labor relations and working time arrangements from the perspective of economic, employment and social policies of governments in the region. Participants from other EU countries will be called upon to share their experiences and solutions and engage with participants from South Eastern Europe to identify best practice and recommendations to progressive, social democratic and left parties in the region and the PES/PES Women in the preparation for EP elections in 2014.

Reconciliation of work, family and private life is recognized at EU level as an important priority for achieving gender equality, increasing women's participation in the labor market, and promoting the sharing of caring responsibilities between women and men. Reconciliation is a key element for achieving one of the EU headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy, namely to raise to 75 % the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, which means it is necessary to give priority to addressing barriers to women's participation in the labour market and men's more active involvement in caring duties when implementing the strategy. The Commission's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 points out that economic independence is a prerequisite for enabling both women and men to exercise control over their lives and identifies reconciliation measures among the key actions for gender equality. The European Pact for Gender Equality (2011- 2020) also stresses the importance of promoting better work-life balance for women and men throughout the life-course as to enhance equality between women and men, including ensuring that both women and men can participate in the labour market. (European Institute for Gender Equality - EIGE, 2011)

Format

The "Korčula School" has a think tank and informal format. It applies Chatham House rules to foster a free, open and substantive debate among participants. The meeting is not recorded, but participant rapporteurs will be asked to take note of recommendations and political messages from each session. The meeting will have an open and interactive format. No personal attribution will be made to the "messages" and recommendations.

Participation of both women and men, politicians, government representatives and activists is encouraged for the "Korčula School". To quote Croatian MP Branko Lukšić - the discussion on gender equality is being led mainly by women and as long men serve only as "decoration" in these discussions, reports by the Ombudswoman will only get a few minutes of attention and business will continue as usual, which in his opinion proves that "there is no gender equality in the Croatian society"⁸.

The two-day "Korčula School" think tank meeting will have four substantive sessions, a key note presentation at the opening of the meeting, and each session will be opened by a panel of three designated speakers/discussants to kick off the discussion. There will be a thematic focus group on "Initiatives, challenges and strategies for European Parliamentary Elections 2014 - outstanding issues and roadmap" and a special dinner address on "Green economy, employment opportunities and implications for gender equality".

The meeting is expected to conclude with a joint set of messages agreed by all participants. Each session will have a rapporteur to help formulate the "messages".

Expected outcomes

The key messages and recommendations from this exchange will make an immediate contribution

⁸ Meeting of the Croatian Parliament, 31 May 2012

to the ongoing preparations for the 2014 EP elections, i.e. the political platform formulated by the PES Women and consequently the PES. The meeting will be followed by direct feedback to the social democratic and progressive political parties in the region as well as follow-up with women's organizations.

Participation

This year's Korčula School invitations have been extended to high level party and government participants from the region: Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. A number of guest participants outside the region have confirmed participation, namely: Pia Locatelli (MP Italy); Marije Laffeber (Deputy Secretary General, PES); Judit Taczos (Adviser in FEPS); Marja Bijl (European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity); Ana Radičević (Regional Program Manager, NDI).

Background documentation

Participants are asked to contribute any papers, documents and their views in advance of the meeting, following the agenda items. Also participants are urged to reply to the questionnaire sent in advance along the agenda items for feedback.

Translation

The meeting will be conducted in Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin with English interpretation.

Funding

Travel and accommodation expenses will be covered for invited participants from the South Eastern Europe region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia). The organisers will refund in situ based on receipts.

Participants who are coming from other countries are kindly asked to fund their own travel and accommodation.

The organizers will bear the cost of the lunches and dinners for all participants during the think tank meeting.

The School is financially supported by the Olof Palme International Center, Sweden
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Draft Agenda

Day 1, Thursday, 29 August 2013

Afternoon
20:15h

Arrival of participants
Dinner in Korčula

Day 1, Friday 30 August 2013

8:30h – 9 h

Registration

9h-9:15h

Opening

9:15h-10h

Key Note/Introductory address (tbd) EU membership – challenges and solution to reconcile work and life

10h-11h

Session 1: Participation of women in the labour market, employment patterns and modalities for reconciling work and life (full time, part time, flexible time).

Questions: Are women more employed full time? What are the employment patterns in the region and how do they relate to the status of women, i.e. work/life balance? What are arrangements for flexible and part-time work? How do these employment patterns and working modalities affect different generations of women? What are the implications for employment benefits and status for those in part-time work? What is good employment practice?

11h – 11:15h

Coffee break

11:15h-13h

Session 2: The Care Economy – innovative solutions for the social welfare model in times of economic crisis and economic transition.

Questions: How are employment patterns and modalities impacting the care economy? Are family patterns changing? Comprehensive and integrated policies, particularly employment policies, aimed at promoting a balance between working and family life for both men and women Parental leave challenges – reality or myth? The grey economy and impact on double burden – keeping the job and caring for the family? Child care – public and private solutions? Elderly care solutions? The role of the state in the care economy? What private sector solutions are good practice? Public-private solutions?

13h-14:30h

Lunch

14:30h-16h

Session 3: “Sharing the burden – an issue of gender equality?”

Questions: Behaviour change, patriarchal relationships and public sector answers? Burden sharing: total “tied” time per day for each employed parent living with a partner, having one or more children under 12 or a dependent or an elderly dependent; travelling time; basic time spent on domestic work; other time devoted to the family.

16h-16:15h

Coffee break

16:15h-18h

Session 4: Bringing it all together into a comprehensive and integrated package – key messages from thematic sessions

19:30h

Dinner address - “Green economy, employment opportunities and implications for gender equality”, Marta Szigeti Bonifert

Day 2, Friday 30 August 2013

8h-10h

Discussion: Initiatives, challenges and strategies for European Parliamentary Elections 2014 - outstanding issues and roadmap. Lead: Zita Gurmai, Marije Laffeber.

10h-11h

Adoption of key messages and concluding remarks.

13h

Lunch

19h

Dinner for participants remaining in Korčula (Žrnovo village)

Background Information

“Korčula School” 2012

The “Korčula School” is jointly organised by the FEPS and CEE Network for Gender Issues/ European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity with the financial support of the Olof Palme International Center.

The initiative for the meeting was inspired by the free thinking, substantive and open discussions held in Korčula from 1963-1974 as Korčula Praxis School, a unique political, ideological exchange of views and forward looking debates on critical issues of the moment.

The meeting was attended by 24 participants – women members of European and national parliaments, women politicians and activists, academic - from the CEE region - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and from France, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain).

The main topic of the meeting was “Political, Economic and Social Challenges in South Eastern Europe – impact on gender equality”.

The objective of this “Korčula School” was to discuss the political, social and economic choices that South Eastern Europe has, within the broader European framework, particularly from the perspective of gender equality and the empowerment of all social actors to deal with the current challenges. The debates are designed to inform and inspire the broader political discussions undertaken by the FEPS, the Party of European Socialists and PES Women the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, especially in view of European Parliamentary elections in 2014 and further EU enlargement.

The discussions were governed by Chatham House rules and were off-the-record.

The School was financially supported by the Sida&Olof Palme International Center Centre