



PRESS RELEASE

New Financial Instruments are Gender-Blind

Key Representatives of Women's Networks and Organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States Call for the New EU Financial Instruments to be Amended to Integrate Gender Perspectives

A delegation representing major gender equality networks and organizations from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) met on June 13-15, in Brussels to deliberate on current changes in EU policy towards their countries. During their stay, the delegation, which was supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), met with Members of the European Parliament and EC Officials to convey several concerns relating to the new Financial Instruments. Discussions focused mainly on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and the Stability Instrument (IS), as these instruments will be the framework for EU support to most countries in South-East Europe (SEE) and the European part of the Commonwealth of Independent States from 2007 until 2013.

Concerns expressed by the delegation include:

- The EU commitment to the promotion of gender equality is not reflected at all, or otherwise very weakly reflected, in all the new Financial Instruments.
- The new instruments (and in particular the ENPI and the IPA), fail to draw on the lessons learned by the 8 Central and Eastern European New Member States under the 'old' instruments, and particularly, the

considerable challenges encountered by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in gaining access to EU funds.

- It is critical to ensure a transparent, participatory approach in formulating the implementation and monitoring rules, and procedures for the new financial instruments. This must include the development of action plans at national level, in which not only governments, but also civil society, including NGOs engaged in advocacy work, must be involved in a meaningful and constructive way.
- Cross-country or sub-regional cooperation to advance gender equality is at risk of being hindered by different instruments with varying rules, and procedures being applied to different categories of SEE/CIS countries.

While the group appreciated the interest of Members of Parliament and EC Officials in hearing their views and concerns, they were also surprised to realize that many officials deny the relevance of gender within these documents, rather than recognizing it as a critical cross-cutting concern enshrined in binding commitments by the EU and all its Members.

As Kinga Lohman from KARATE Coalition, a network of NGOs from the CEE/CIS region, pointed out, "Given the prevailing inequality between women and men in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and knowing the strong EU commitments to the promotion of gender equality, it was disappointing to hear EU Officials argue that gender does not need to be mentioned, since it is already taken care of in the founding treaties ... especially given that women after all make up half of the recipient population that is supposed to be served by these new instruments... and that women have been one of the groups most affected by transition and globalization"

The advocates will be providing concrete proposals on amending the documents to integrate gender and are committed to monitoring the follow-up implementation.

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