

A SUMMARY REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL POLICY FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY 2006-2010

Systematic implementation of a large number of measures in the *National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2006-2010* has continued in all seven programme areas of the Action Plan. As a result of the activities carried out, public awareness of human rights of women has been raised, the anti-discrimination legislation has been improved, a number of new, important strategic documents have been adopted, massive campaigns have been conducted in the area of suppressing violence and the political participation of women, co-operation with non-governmental organisations has been further developed, institutional mechanisms at the national and local levels have been strengthened, and the development of statistical methodologies and gender research has continued.

1. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

In the area of promoting human rights of women, along with developing anti-discrimination legislation, many activities have been undertaken with the aim of raising public awareness of this issue. A number of conferences, roundtable discussions, seminars, forums, public debates, campaigns and other promotional activities have been held, very often in co-operation with non-governmental organisations.

It should be noted that in 2007, the Government Office for Gender Equality organised an international conference in Zagreb, entitled "Awareness Raising Conference about EU Policies and Legislation on Gender Equality". The conference was organised within the framework of the *Gender Equality Community Programme*, with the financial support of the European Commission. It was attended by Ms. Jadranka Kosor, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity at the time, and Ms. Fay Devonic, the representative of the European Commission, who was the Head of Unit for Equality between Men and Women at the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities at that time, as well as by other representatives of EU member states, representatives of Croatian state administration bodies, other stakeholders and the media. On that occasion, Ms. Devonic pointed out that "the developments in Croatia are very much in tune with the EU Roadmap", and assessed the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality

2006-2010 as "a very positive step which shows the importance accorded by Croatia to gender equality:"

Following the Conference, bilingual *Conference Proceedings of the Awareness Raising Conference about EU Policies and Legislation on Gender Equality* were published with a circulation of 2,000, containing integral presentations made at the Conference by its international and Croatian participants.

By participating in the *Gender Equality Community Programme* with the project entitled *Taking gender equality to local communities* launched by the Republic of Malta, in partnership with Portugal, Italy and Greece, Croatia contributed to the success of the project and the preparation of a Project Report, published in the languages of the participating countries under the title *Taking gender equality to local communities: Examples of good practice in promoting gender equality*.

As regards the obligation to disseminate international and national documents to extend knowledge and raise awareness of the gender equality policy, in the period 2005-2009 dozens of publications and other materials were printed and widely distributed, including "*A Short Guide to CEDAW – the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the Republic of Croatia*", *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence and its Explanatory Memorandum*, *Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making and its Explanatory Memorandum*, *Recommendation Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanism, and its Explanatory Memorandum*).

Three editions of the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2006-2010 have been published, and the Policy has also been published in English and in Braille.

The Office for Gender Equality is making ongoing efforts to familiarise the public with the EU Gender Equality Strategy, resulting in the publication and promotion of its Croatian version entitled "*A Roadmap to Equality Between Women and Men 2006-2010*", and in the publication of "*A Glossary of Gender Terms According to EU Standards*", which had been prepared for the Office by the Centre for Women's Studies.

In addition to national strategic documents in this area, several thousands of leaflets with the texts of the *Gender Equality Act*, the *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security*, the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, etc. have been published and disseminated.

The Office disseminates all printed materials to the Parliament, state administration and local self-government services, gender equality commissions, political parties, libraries, faculties, etc. Some of these publications have been included in mandatory exam reading lists for university students.

State administration bodies and local self-government units provide funding for NGO projects on a regular basis, through public competitions, and maintain partnership relations with representatives of the civil society.

In the past four years, the Office for Gender Equality has provided financial support for about 70 projects proposed by non-governmental organisations active in the area of gender equality. It also regularly provides financial support for other NGO activities.

In partnership with NGOs, several research projects have been conducted, among which we would like to single out the research "Unknown EU uncovered – Guide to the labyrinth of key regulations that influence gender discrimination in our lives", carried out by the NGO B.a.B.e. with the support of the Office and the European Commission, "Creating better conditions for women through social responsibility" of Poreč Centre for Civil Initiatives, and "Promoting the policy of equal opportunities in the area of labour" of the Centre for Education, Counselling and Research (CESI), which was part of a larger project financed by the European Commission.

The Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity has provided funding for NGO projects on protecting women from domestic violence and those relating to the promotion of youth and children's rights.

A report by the Government Office for NGOs, containing systematic data on funds provided to NGOs by state and local authorities, clearly shows that support for projects for the protection and promotion of women's human rights has been on the increase. In 2006 it accounted for 2.47% and in 2007 for 4.5% of the total State Budget funds earmarked for NGO projects in the area of protecting and promoting human rights.

As part of the pre-accession PHARE 2006 programme *Democratisation and human rights*, six projects are currently being implemented with the goal of improving the position of women and promoting their human rights.

International Women's Day (8 March) is regularly observed by a number of activities and events, attended by representatives of the Government, Croatian Parliament's Committee on Gender Equality, NGOs and local gender equality commissions. Many events are also organised on a regular basis to mark *International Day of Rural Women* on 15 October. In this

context, the *Conference on the Position of Women in Rural Areas of the Republic of Croatia* will be organised this year at the Plitvice Lakes. The organiser of the Conference is the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, in co-operation with the Office for Gender Equality and the EU/Taiex Unit.

Since 2007, training on the protection of human rights and human rights legislation has been organised at the Centre for Professional Training and Development within the Central State Office for Public Administration, through one-day seminars intended for all civil servants. Last year, the seminar "Legal Provisions on Gender Equality" was introduced, offering yet another opportunity to spread knowledge on gender equality to a wider circle of civil servants.

A representative of the Office is regularly engaged to test the knowledge of candidates for jobs involving gender equality issues, who are taking the State Professional Examination, organised for all newly employed civil servants.

So far, the Judicial Academy has regularly included gender equality topics in training programmes for judicial officials and staff. In December 2008, a round table discussion entitled "Gender Equality: the Application of the CEDAW before Croatian Courts and the Croatian Legislation and Case Law" was organised for judges, public prosecutors and representatives of the civil society.

As part of the pre-accession CARDS 2003 Programme "Good Governance and the Rule of Law", funding was provided for the project entitled "Improving the Legal and Institutional Framework for Achieving Gender Equality", which was implemented by the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb in co-operation with the NGO CESI, and which included training for judges, jurists, employers and politicians.

In the area of protecting women's human rights, some legislative amendments have also been made. The new *Gender Equality Act* of July 2008 was aligned with the provisions of the international standards currently in force and with European Union directives in the area of gender equality.

The *Anti-discrimination Act*, which entered into force on 1 January 2009, has laid the foundations for achieving equal opportunities by provisions regulating the protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic affiliation, colour, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, trade union membership, education, social status, marital or family status, age, health condition, disability, genetic heritage, native identity, expression or sexual orientation.

The adoption of a new *Protection from Domestic Violence Act* is in progress. This Act will improve the work of relevant authorities in relation to protection from domestic violence, and it will be in line with contemporary international guidelines. The *Criminal Code* was amended as far back as 2006, by including a new paragraph defining a crime committed out of hatred as a new criminal offence.

In 2008 the *Free Legal Aid Act* was adopted, which enabled non-governmental organisations to become actively involved in representing citizens before courts in civil and administrative lawsuits, and to provide counselling to women and raise their awareness of legal protection mechanisms in the event of discrimination.

Special attention has been given to promoting the position of women belonging to national minorities and disabled women. The Republic of Croatia was among the first states to sign the new *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, and it has built its recommendations into the *National Strategy of Uniform Policies for Persons with Disabilities 2007–2015*. At the 12th Croatian Symposium for Persons with Disabilities, a special discussion was held on the "Application of UN Convention to Women with Disabilities".

Support has been provided for NGO projects, and workshops and seminars have been held with the aim of empowering women with disabilities. Regular co-operation has been established with the Association of Persons with Disabilities of Croatia (SOIH). Specifically, in 2007 the Office for Gender Equality, in conjunction with the Federation of Associations of Persons with Disabilities of Croatia (SOIH), organised an official presentation of the *National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2006-2010* in Braille and participated in the 6th Symposium of Multiple Sclerosis Patients, organised by the Federation of Associations of Multiple Sclerosis Patients of Croatia on the topic "The Family and Multiple Sclerosis". In the same year, the Office provided financial assistance to the NGO European Education Centre for Blind People (ECES) and the Association of Muscular Dystrophy Patients in Zagreb. In 2008, co-operation was realised with the Association of Person with Disabilities in Podunavlje region on the occasion of celebrating *3 December – International Day of Persons with Disabilities*, and a fashion show featuring women with disabilities entitled "Vukovar 2008! – The Same, Yet Different" was held, with the aim of fostering affirmation and more active involvement of women with disabilities in the life of the community in areas of special state concern.

In co-operation with the SOIH Network of Women with Disabilities, the Office has released information on the SOS telephone line for disabled women victims of violence on its website, and has maintained on-going co-operation with this Network.

The Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity has reported that preparations have been made for an empirical research to be conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and in co-operation with the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Law of the University of Zagreb. This research is planned to include an assessment of the needs of families of persons with disabilities, an analysis of the current situation regarding the involvement of persons with disabilities in the life of the community, and a situation analysis relating to identification of the needs of persons with disabilities.

The rights of women belonging to national minorities are protected by applying the *Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities*, and by implementing the *National Programme for Roma* and *Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015* (in 2007, a total of HRK 14 million was allocated for this purpose, which was a 500 percent increase compared to 2005). In co-operation with the Office for National Minorities, the Office for Gender Equality has established the *Working group for improved collection of statistical data on the position of Roma women in local communities and society in general, in the areas of education, employment, health care and participation in public and political life*. Co-operation has been established with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the area of research into the reproductive health of Roma women and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases among these women.

The *Working group for collecting information on women belonging to national minorities and preparing action programmes aimed at improving their position* has also been established. Representatives of non-governmental organisations and national minorities participate in the work of these two working groups.

The Association of Roma Women "Better Future" has carried out a research project entitled "Life of Roma Women in Croatia with Special Reference to Their Access to Education", with the financial support of the Office for National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. A report on this research was presented in the form of a publication bearing the same name, which was printed in 1,000 copies.

Detailed information on all the aforesaid activities, undertaken with the aim of promoting and protecting human rights of women, as well as relevant documents, research studies and analyses, is available on the websites of the Office for Gender Equality (www.ured-ravnopravnost.hr), the Ombudsman for Gender Equality (www.prs.hr), other state administration bodies and non-governmental organisations.

2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The reduction of female unemployment, in combination with the economic empowerment of women and the elimination of all other forms of discrimination on the labour market, is part of the programme for implementation of the National Policy and one of the most important tasks in achieving genuine equality of men and women.

In this area, work has continued on improving the legislative and strategic frameworks, and many other measures have also been undertaken with the aim of raising public awareness and making the public more sensitive to these issues.

The *national legislation on equal opportunities has been aligned with the acquis communautaire in Chapter 19 – Social policy and employment*. The *Croatia Progress Report* hailed the adoption of a new Gender Equality Act (OG 82/08), as one of the key elements in the negotiating process for this chapter. Significant changes were introduced by the new Act. The prohibition of discrimination was extended to include discrimination in the area of the labour market and employment, by adding new provisions on the prohibition of discrimination in relation to childbirth, pregnancy, parenthood, and on harmonising private and professional life. Another novelty is that the Act for the first time prescribes sanctions for discriminatory conduct by employers, especially during job interviews when questions are asked regarding the candidate's marital status, number of children and plans to have more children.

The *Gender Equality Act*, the *Anti-discrimination Act* and the *Labour Act* prohibit any form of gender-based discrimination in the area of labour and employment, and guarantee the right to equal pay for work of equal value for women and men.

In July 2008, the *Maternity and Parental Rights and Benefits Act* was adopted, which lays down the basic rights of employed, self-employed and unemployed mothers/parents to parental leaves and benefits provided by the *Labour Act* and the *Act on Maternity Leave for Self-Employed and Unemployed Mothers*. The Act introduces 'parental leave' instead of 'supplementary maternity leave', opens the possibility of taking this leave in portions until the child's eighth birthday, enables every mother, who does not exercise the right to a maternity benefit in the capacity as an employed mother during mandatory maternity leave, to receive this benefit in the amount of at least 50 percent of the budget base unit, enables transfer of rights to the other parent, etc.

In the area of pension insurance, the *Act on Amendments to the Act on Entitlement to Pension Insurance of Active Military Personnel, Police Officers and Authorised Officials* was

adopted in 2008. This Act provides for special arrangements for the exercise of compulsory pension insurance rights under the compulsory pension insurance (inter-generational solidarity) scheme, in that it prescribes the same age and length of service requirements for entitlement to old-age pensions and early retirement pensions for men and women. In this way, full alignment has been achieved with the *acquis communautaire* in this area.

The Government has adopted the *National Employment Action Plan 2005-2008*, based on the employment guidelines laid down for member states by the European Union, including the guidelines on gender equality (EU Guideline 6). On the basis of this Action Plan, *Annual Plans for Promoting Employment for 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009* were adopted. On the basis of the measures in the Annual Plan for Promoting Employment, in 2006 the Croatian Employment Service provided employment subsidies for 1,652 women, in 2007 for 2,255 women, in 2008 for 1,956 women, i.e. there was a total of 5,863 women whose employment was subsidised in these three years.

As part of the implementation of the *Annual Plans for Promoting Employment for 2006 and 2007*, the training measures for known and unknown employers, included activities intended for the group of long-term unemployed women. Within the framework of its training scheme for unemployed persons, in 2008, the Croatian Employment Service financed training for known employers for 426 women (38.6% of the total number of participants) and training for unknown employers for 1,259 (53% of the total number of persons covered by these training programmes). In the past three years, training for unknown employers has been received by a total of 3,355 women.

Furthermore, in 2007 a total of 248 women participated in various courses organised in co-operation with local self-government bodies. A total of 3,977 unemployed women attended workshops on improving active job-seeking skills in 2007.

In addition, a number of NGOs organise computer courses for unemployed women, and other courses to help them in active job seeking.

Pursuant to the *Memorandum on Joint Assessment of Employment Policy Priorities (JAP)* signed between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the European Commission in 2008, the *National Employment Promotion Plan (2009–2010)* was adopted. One of the key priority goals to be attained through this Plan is to "increase the employability

and participation rate of prime-age women (especially those with low or inadequate skills)" on the labour market.¹

It should be emphasised that great progress has been made in realising measures related to eliminating sexist language and promoting language which upholds the principles of gender equality on the labour market.

In 2008, the Central Bureau of Statistics published the new *National Classification of Occupations*, in which all occupations are listed for the first time in both the masculine and feminine forms, creating the linguistic preconditions for promoting a more balanced representation of men and women on the labour market.

The new *Gender Equality Act* prescribes that "when decisions are made about the assignment of jobs and other decisions concerning the rights and obligations of civil servants, the job title shall appear in both the masculine and the feminine form. The same obligation is laid down in the *Ordinance on uniform standards and measures for determining job titles and descriptions in the Civil Service*. The Act also provides that job vacancies must be advertised in such a way that the advertisement clearly states that persons of both genders may apply for the job, and when advertising a job it is not permitted to use expressions which lead or might lead to discrimination on grounds of gender, marital or family status or sexual orientation.

Particular emphasis has been placed recently on implementing measures aimed at strengthening women's entrepreneurship, and Croatian experiences in the area of promoting women's entrepreneurship have been perceived as an example of good practice, within the international project of the Republic of Malta entitled "Taking gender equality to local communities", which took place within the 2007 *Gender Equality Community Programme*, in which Malta, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Croatia participated.

In recent years, the share of women entrepreneurs in Croatia has been rising and it currently stands at close to 30 percent. In order to strengthen women's entrepreneurship, the ministries, local government bodies and non-governmental organisations have been implementing various programmes aimed at strengthening women's entrepreneurship and

¹ Measures for achieving this goal include reviewing the existing legislation and labour market policies to ensure they are well suited to increasing the labour market participation of lower-skilled women, with special emphasis on boosting their motivation to participate in continuing education and training; providing more education, training and work-practice programmes geared to the needs and circumstances of women with low or inadequate skills returning to the labour market; and increasing the availability of affordable child care and increasing the number of one-shift schools to facilitate women's participation in the labour market.

economic empowerment of women. The Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship is preparing the *Strategy for Developing Women's Entrepreneurship up to 2010*. A working group has been formed, including representatives of employers, entrepreneurs and state administration bodies, and the first draft of the strategy framework has been drawn up.

The Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship is enabling women to become involved in entrepreneurship on a fast-track basis, by means of a special project entitled "Women's Entrepreneurship". The project beneficiaries are small and medium-sized companies, crafts, co-operative societies and institutions privately and majority owned by women.

Women entrepreneurs are participating in other MELE projects, such as one to encourage marketing, another to encourage competitiveness, and another concerning technical alignment with EU standards. Women also participate in projects on innovations and innovative production clusters.

The Ministry is also encouraging women's entrepreneurship by subsidising interest on loans for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, in co-operation with counties, and with the guarantee of HAMAG. It should be emphasised that loans within the "Women's entrepreneurship" sub-project account for 19% of the total loans in the "Local Development Project – Entrepreneur" scheme.

Women have also been encouraged to take part in other projects within the competence of the Ministry, such as "Training for entrepreneurship", to receive co-funding for the specialist study "Strategic entrepreneurship" and to take part in the project "Making a living".

The Ministry of the Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship and the Office for Gender Equality support financially the internet portal www.poduzetna.hr, which carries a great deal of useful information designed to empower women entrepreneurs.

Every year, *Women Entrepreneurs' Day*, which falls on 17 May, is marked, organised by the Croatian "Krug" Businesswomen's Association, under the auspices of President Stjepan Mesić. In 2008 an award for the most successful woman entrepreneur and manager in Croatia was presented for the first time, which attracted a great deal of media attention. The Office for Gender Equality has maintained on-going co-operation with this NGO, and received acknowledgments from "Krug" for "support in the implementation of measures and attainment of goals of "Krug" in 2007 and 2008."

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development has carried out an analysis of the register of owners of agricultural businesses, crafts businesses, companies and co-operatives, to assess the situation regarding gender equality in property and legal relations in rural areas. This analysis has shown that women are owners of 28% of agricultural businesses, 0.3% of crafts businesses in the Register of Agricultural Businesses and 0.2% of the companies and co-operatives registered in this Register. Of the total acres of arable farm land registered in the Register, 18 percent is owned by women.

In co-operation with the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia and with the assistance of the EC-TAIEX, the MAFRD will organise a conference at the Plitvice Lakes on 13 October, on the subject "The Position of Women in Rural Areas of the Republic of Croatia". The objective of the conference is to raise public awareness of the ministries' activities concerning the position of women in rural areas (in relation to economic development, social welfare, health care, education, preservation of tradition), the activities implemented with the aim of promoting gender equality and disseminating information about the Gender Equality Act, the experiences of European Union countries and the legislative framework of the EU (*acquis communautaire*) in the area of gender equality.

With a view to collecting information and gaining an insight into the situation and possibilities for promoting the position of women on the labour market, a number of research activities have been implemented, including:

- In 2007, the Government Office for Gender Equality carried out empirical research entitled *Identification of standards of discrimination in employing women*, in co-operation with scientists from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and the Croatian Employment Service;
- In co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Government Office for National Minorities is carrying out research into the position on the labour market of women belonging to the Serbian national minority, on the basis of a recommendation by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- In 2008, the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, in co-operation with the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Zagreb, carried out a scientific research project entitled "The connection between fertility and the sector of women's employment in Croatia";

- The Institute of Economics has carried out research entitled "Differences in pay between men and women";
- The internet portal MojPosao regularly conducts research including a gender component, such as "The role of the sexes in the world of work" (2007), "Research into employment" (2008), or comprehensive research on perceptions of gender differences in the business environment entitled "Men and women in the business world".

Financial support is also provided for NGO projects promoting the implementation of the equal opportunities policy in the area of labour and employment (for example, the research project of the Poreč Centre for Civil Initiatives, entitled *Creating better conditions for women through social responsibility*, and a study conducted in companies in Zagreb area as part of a larger project of the NGO CESI (Centre for Education, Counselling and Research), entitled *Promoting the policy of equal opportunity in the area of labour*).

With the aim of raising public awareness of this problem, the Office for Gender Equality has also translated publications by the European Commission, "A Code of Practice on the Implementation of Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value for Women and Men" and "Manual for Gender Mainstreaming of Employment Policies", and published them on its website.

We would also like to mention the following activities:

- A topical session of the Committee on Gender Equality of the Croatian Parliament was held, in co-operation with the Office for Gender Equality and the B.a.B.e. NGO, on the eve of International Women's Day 2007, entitled "The position of women on the labour market";
- In 2008, the Ombudsman for Gender Equality organised a panel discussion entitled "Women and poverty – Job insecurity and unemployment", at which a large number of experts, representatives of the Government, state administration bodies, the academic community, NGOs and trade unions debated the gender-related aspects of fixed-term employment, informal sector employment and unemployment, and the Head of Office made a presentation about gender-related aspects of unemployment in Croatia;
- In the same year, the internet portal MojPosao organised a forum under the auspices of the Government Office for Gender Equality, entitled "Is there a stronger gender in the business world?";

- A number of conferences were organised by non-governmental organisations (the round table discussion on "The feminisation of poverty and women on the labour market", organised by the Zagreb Autonomous Women's House; the CESI association organised a conference entitled "The position of women on the labour market" and the B.a.B.e. association organised a conference in the Vukovar-Srijem County entitled "A model for the development of women's entrepreneurship within a motivational entrepreneurial environment");
- The journal *Labour Law* organised a seminar at which the Head of the Government Office for Gender Equality delivered a presentation on the topic "Gender equality and anti-discrimination measures, with special reference to the situation in employment relations".

Statistical data are systematically collected, and indicators of gender gaps in the social security system and on the labour market consolidated. Quarterly indicators are also compiled, which are subsequently included in annual reports prepared by the Croatian Employment Service. In addition, gender-disaggregated data are regularly published and disseminated by the Central Bureau of Statistics, which, in addition to yearbooks, monthly press releases and reports, has been issuing a publication entitled *Women and Men in Croatia* on a regular basis (since 2006).

Moreover, we would like to point out that encouraging social dialogue at the local level, with the aim of improving the position of women on the labour market, was the topic of the 2nd Co-ordination Meeting of County Commissions for Gender Equality. To this end, more intensive co-operation was agreed between County Commissions for Gender Equality and County Economic and Social Councils, in which representatives of all three social partners are included, and the Head of the Office gave several lectures on the topic *National policy for promoting gender equality* among CESC members.

The harmonisation of family and professional responsibilities, including raising public awareness of the need to share household/family duties between men and women, is encouraged by providing new preschool places, introducing single-shift classes in as many schools as possible, and through the process of changing attitudes of the public through media reports and NGO activities. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports has reported that the percentage of children of preschool age included in public preschool education in the past two years has risen to 55.12%, thanks to new preschool facilities provided with the support of the World Bank.

The Office for Gender Equality has supported financially an educational campaign in *National Geographic Junior* magazine, adapted for young primary-school pupils, showing equality in sharing family duties. In 2008, six issues were published, with pictures and texts in comic-book form, with the motto "*Stronger Together*". The publication of statistical data in the media on the number of fathers taking parental leave, and positive articles on families, featuring fathers on parental leave, have raised public awareness of the advantages of the equal distribution of parental duties.

3. GENDER-SENSITIVE EDUCATION

In Croatia, there is no marked gender gap in the approach to education: statistics indicate there are equal numbers of girls and boys in primary and secondary schools, while more girls apply to universities. However, there is a difference in the selection of secondary schools and university departments, which is a reflection of the continuing existence of the division of work into male and female occupations, stereotypes and prejudice. Therefore the introduction of gender sensitive education at all levels, the eradication of gender stereotypes, and the systematic training of teaching staff in gender equality, have been confirmed as national priorities.

Changes to the legislative framework during the past two years have facilitated progress in this area. Thus, the new *Gender Equality Act* prescribes obligations in the sphere of education, not only for the state body competent for education, but also for other institutions in which education is a primary activity. Among other things, the Act provides for the systematic implementation of measures to ensure equal access at all levels of education, the promotion of non-discriminatory learning about women and men, the eradication of gender stereotypes, the appreciation of gender-related aspects in all educational spheres, and the promotion of equal representation of both sexes in management structures.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sport has adopted the *Textbook Standard*, which, in response to a proposal from this Office, meets the requirements of the Gender Equality Act in the section entitled *Ethical Requirements*.

A further step forward in this area was achieved by the adoption of the *Act on Academic and Professional Titles and Academic Degrees* in 2007, according to which professional and academic titles and degrees must be stated in both the masculine and feminine forms. The alignment of legislation in this area continued with the adoption of the

Act on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education, which proscribes non-approval of textbooks whose content contravenes the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, or which is inappropriate in its treatment of human and minority rights, fundamental freedoms, relationships between the sexes and education for a democratic society.

Regarding stereotypes in textbooks, in 2007 the Ombudsman for Gender Equality carried out an analysis of primary school textbooks used in Croatian language and literature lessons, and concluded that there was "a positive development in using gender sensitive language, which is in agreement with the ethical requirements of the Textbook Standard. In fact, 94% of the writing in the main texts in textbooks use gender neutral or gender sensitive language." In the coming period, it will be necessary to make extra efforts to ensure that the requirements regarding artwork and illustrations, prescribed by the Textbook Standard, are also implemented. More recent research² into school textbooks has confirmed the tendency towards an equal approach in showing success in relation to sex, and on the whole, textbooks do not promote stereotypes based on gender or physical appearance.

The expert working group established by the Education and Teacher Training Agency has produced the *Programme for further professional development and training in the sphere of gender equality for those engaged in educational activities*, and in co-operation with the women's associations which participated in its production, have held pilot seminars for people employed in education.

Regarding the need to promote further knowledge and awareness of the significance of gender aware education, the Office has translated the *Recommendation (2007)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender mainstreaming in education*, and has begun to introduce it in educational institutions, and the provisions of this Recommendation have been incorporated in the above-mentioned Programme for further training for those working in education. At a meeting organised by the Agency for Vocational Training in September 2009, and within the framework of professional training for the leaders of inter-county expert councils in all sectors of vocational education, the Head of the Office gave an expert presentation and acquainted those present with the *Recommendation*, the *Gender Equality Act* and the *National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2006-2010*.

In Croatia, there is still a significant difference between the sexes when it comes to selecting secondary schools, so that girls are in the majority in gymnasiums (62.7%) and art schools (71.7%), whereas boys are in the majority in industrial and artisan schools (62.5%).

² "Human rights in primary schools – Theory and practice", 2008-2009. Research by the Centre for Human Rights and independent experts.

Monitoring of the situation has shown that in Croatia, as in other European countries, there is a continuing growth trend in women's education and in the proportion of female graduates, while the proportion of male graduates is falling. Students' choice of university department still reflects the division between male and female occupations. Women are more likely to choose the social sciences or humanities, and represent over 90% of graduates in the teaching profession and in social welfare services. They are also in the majority in art (68.1%), law (69.8%) and the biological sciences (82.3%). Women are in the minority in the technical sciences, although there has been an increase in the numbers of women enrolling during the past few years.

Although *Women's Studies* are still not part of institutional education, there has been encouraging progress reached on the basis of obligations in implementing measures from the *National Policy*. In regard to this, it should be mentioned that the National Council for Higher Education presented the *Recommendation* to the Rector's Conference and university senates in September 2008, supporting the introduction of gender sensitive education at the level of higher education, and in accordance with this, recommended the formation and introduction of new courses in women's studies at undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate levels, in institutions for higher education which have the potential and conditions for introducing them. Among other activities linked to this topic, we should mention the round table discussion held in 2007, organised by the Centre for Women's Studies (an NGO), at which the problems of scientific discipline and the scientific field of women's studies and their integration into higher education in the Republic of Croatia were discussed, and which brought together women experts from the region, who presented examples of good practice from countries in which women's studies have become an integral part of university curricula.

On the other hand, courses linked to the topic of gender equality have already been introduced in Croatian universities, and various university departments offer a number of courses covering the above topics.

Extracurricular gender education programmes for primary and secondary schools are usually carried out in co-operation with NGOs. In its report on the implementation of this measure, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport states that it provides regular support and financing for the implementation of programmes and projects which include topics in the area of promoting gender equality, and the integrated educational content is part of the programme *Education in human rights and democratic citizenship*, which includes content relating to gender equality.

The Office for Gender Equality regularly monitors outcomes and provides financial support for scientific and research projects aimed at improving the state of affairs in the sphere of gender equality. Along with the research mentioned earlier, a scientific research project is under way, called "Perceptions, experiences and attitudes concerning gender discrimination in the Republic of Croatia", which is being carried out in co-operation with the Department of Psychology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb and the Institute for Social Research, and the results of which will be used in drafting the new *National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2011-2015*.

Scientific publications, other publications and books in the area of artistic and cultural creation with gender-related themes also receive support, for example *Women in science and technology* (by K. Prpić, L. Oliveira and S. Hemlin), *Gender (sexual) characteristics of space and time in the Republic of Croatia* (a scientific study by Dr. Jasenka Kodrnja), *Croatian women photographers: Contributions to the history of Croatian photography 1870-2000* (published by the Society of Art Historians), etc.

In several areas of cultural and artistic creation, the Office for Gender Equality continues to support financially a large number of projects and activities. The following are worthy of mention:

- The project by the K-zona association, *Women's artistic creation and education: from virtual to real space*, in the context of which an online portal for women artists was set up (<http://www.cunterview.net/>);
- The research and artistic project *Women's Guide to Zagreb*;
- The multimedia, international exhibition and cultural-artistic project carried out by the Croatian Association of Artists (HULU) in Split, *Women at the crossroads of ideology*;
- The first documentary film about the famous writer and first Croatian female journalist, Marija Jurić Zagorka, which included research and compiling documentary material;
- Sponsorship of the 9th Motovun Film Festival, at which the Office supported the showing of a cycle of eight films characteristic in theme and made by women;
- Support for the production of the *Vagina Monologues* to mark V-day (International Day against Violence against Women and Girls), organised by the Centre for Women's Studies;

- The round table discussion in Pula, *The visibility of women in Croatian cinematography*, in co-operation with the Pula Film Festival and the Commission for Gender Equality of the town of Pula.

4. EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING

With the aim of raising public awareness of the need for increased political representation by women in the legislative and executive, at national and local levels, the Office for Gender Equality of the Republic of Croatia, in co-operation with NGOs, county commissions for gender equality and other state bodies, has carried out a series of activities, including round table discussions, seminars, conferences and other promotional activities, aimed at increasing the proportion of women candidates, during parliamentary elections in 2007 and local elections in 2005 and 2009.

Among the activities of the Office, we would like to draw attention to the following:

In 2007, one thousand copies of the *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making* and the *Explanatory Memorandum* were translated, printed in 1,000 copies and disseminated to state bodies, civil society organisations, political parties and others. Two thousand copies of the second edition of the *Recommendation* were printed in 2008, as part of the *Campaign to promote women's representation in local elections 2009*, so that the wider public could be acquainted with its contents, including political parties, units of local and regional self-government, public services, NGOs, etc.

In 2007, the Office supported research carried out by the Centre for Women's Studies, entitled *Women in Croatian Politics*. The topic of this research was scientific analysis of the values, perceptions and knowledge of Croatian citizens regarding female politicians, the political participation of women, and the social status of women in general. The head of the Office participated in the public presentation of the research results.

The Office also commissioned and published on its website the results of research into gender equality in the media: "Monitoring the frequency and means of representation of the sexes and gender issues in general, in television programmes about the 2007 parliamentary elections".

In December 2008, the *Campaign for promoting women's political representation during local elections in 2009* was launched, with the motto "Let's get balanced!" Activities

within the scope of this Campaign included organising a round table discussion on the topic "What can we do to increase women's political representation at the local level?", which aimed to send the clear message to political parties that at least 40% of their candidates should be women, in accordance with the provisions of the Gender Equality Act. A television and accompanying radio commercial were produced to support the Campaign, showing the legal obligation of political parties and the need to form candidate lists with at least 40% female representation, i.e. the need to increase the involvement of women in the political life of the state. Both commercials were broadcast on TV and radio stations with national and local concessions during March and April 2009.

In this regard, two topical sessions of the Croatian Parliament's Committee on Gender Equality were significant, dealing with the political participation of women, entitled "Young and active: the political participation of young women" and "Women in local elections 2009".

In 2007, within the framework of a public tender for granting financial support, the Office supported four projects connected with the holding of parliamentary elections, and in 2008, supported 23 NGO projects related to increasing women's representation in candidate lists for representative bodies of units of local and regional self-government, including empowering disabled women in their political involvement.

The final reports of associations on the projects carried out show that altogether, 7 lectures, 8 seminars and 37 workshops were held, with the aim of empowering, alerting and educating women. Two new handbooks were produced ("A practical guide for the leaders of units of local and regional self-government in implementing gender equality" and "How to conduct a local campaign"), and one documentary film was released, on the power and potential of disabled women. Radio jingles and a TV commercial were broadcast on national TV and on the privately-owned RTL TV channel. In addition, 8 forums and public debates, 20 roundtable discussions, and 15 press conferences were held, many appearances were made on radio and local TV stations, and many hundreds of articles and columns were written in the daily and weekly press concerning activities relating to the projects being supported. Furthermore, we organised 43 "street events", in which members of NGOs distributed promotional material, answered questions put by members of the public, and drew attention to the composition of the political parties' candidate lists for local elections. A great deal of promotional material was produced in connection with these projects, including dozens of leaflets containing different kinds of information (11,700 printed copies) and 1,380 posters. The NGOs involved carried out detailed analyses of the candidate lists for local elections in three counties and produced an analysis of the extent to which the constitutions of the political

parties in the Osijek-Baranja County were aligned with the Gender Equality Act. A new web portal on women in public and political life was also set up (www.libela.org) by the CESI organisation (Centre for Education, Counselling and Research).

Activities carried out as part of these projects (campaigns, many seminars, round table discussions, workshops and other promotional activities) contributed to the development of public awareness of the lack of women's participation in decision-making at the political level, and the political parties were challenged to address the issue of balancing the representation of the sexes in lists of candidates in all future elections.

The results of local elections held in 2009 showed that there was an increase in the proportion of women candidates, and an increase of about 7% in their representation in the representative bodies at the local government level. Although we cannot be entirely satisfied with the rate of this improvement, it is true that women's representation has been increasing steadily, if we compare the results of local elections held in 2001, 2005 and 2009.

In terms of measures which prescribe that the formal declarations completed by male and female candidates must conform to the Gender Equality Act, so that the feminine forms of nouns must be included, we would like to point out that during the last local elections, held in May 2009, the State Electoral Commission used both the masculine and feminine forms of nouns on these forms, for the first time.

It should also be emphasised that the Central Bureau of Statistics publishes data on the proportion of women participating in elections in its official *Reports* (no. 1397 on the 2009 elections will be published in October 2009).

5. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In the area of suppressing domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, there has been significant progress. A large number of measures are being implemented systematically, in order to suppress domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, and to improve the position of the victims of violence, based on the provisions of the *National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence 2005-2007* and the *National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence 2008-2010*, with the accompanying *Protocol on Handling Domestic Violence Cases* and the *National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality 2006-2010*, as well as other relevant regulations.

This year, the Government of the Republic of Croatia established the *Commission for Advancing Protection from Domestic Violence*, as an advisory, expert governmental body.

In the sphere of legislation, the adoption of the new *Protection from Domestic Violence Act* is in parliamentary procedure. This Act will advance the work of bodies in matters relating to domestic violence and align it with contemporary international guidelines. The provisions of the *Misdemeanours Act* have been taken into account, which relate to the problems of domestic violence (detention, imprisonment, and cautionary measures). The prevention, sanctioning and suppression of all forms of domestic violence is regulated, as is the implementation of appropriate measures against the perpetrator and the provision of protection and assistance for the victims of violence, in order to lessen the consequences of the violence committed against them. The definition of domestic violence has been extended. The term *economic violence* has been introduced, which refers to an act which denies the right to economic independence. Physical, mental, sexual and economic violence in the domestic context are expressly prohibited. Urgent action by all competent bodies is envisaged in cases involving violations of this Act, and fines and prison sentences will be harsher.

The new *Criminal Procedure Act* was adopted on 15 December 2008 and contains provisions which aim to provide protection from domestic violence, particularly relating to the questioning of witnesses and the protection of the rights of victims and injured parties. This Act introduces the victim as a participant in proceedings, with special rights, for the first time in the Croatian legal system.

Furthermore, with the aim of eradicating violence against women and improving the position of women victims of violence, the Republic of Croatia has been an active participant in the Council of Europe's Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence. In implementing the recommendations of the Council of Europe, a national campaign has been launched. The *National Committee for Implementing the Campaign to Eliminate Domestic Violence against Women* was set up within the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity. The Campaign began by commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, on 25 November 2006, with a public presentation in the premises of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The key dates in connection with conducting this Campaign were 8 March (International Women's Day), 15 May (International Family Day), 22 September (National Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women).

There have also been round table discussions on the topic "Economic violence against women" and "Systematic financing of civil society organisations providing direct protection for the victims of domestic violence". The Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and

Intergenerational Solidarity has made a TV advertising film, entitled "Report violence against women". An SOS telephone line for disabled women victims of violence has been set up, and the *Handbook with guidelines for media reporting on domestic violence* printed. On 9 and 10 May 2007, an international seminar was held in Zagreb, entitled "Active male participation in the fight against domestic violence", organised by the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity and the Council of Europe's Directorate General for Human Rights – Division for Gender Equality.

The National Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (22 September 2007) was celebrated and at the same time, special optional postage stamps bearing the recognisable logo of the Campaign went on sale. The income realised from the sale of these postage stamps was donated at the end of 2007 to NGOs running women's shelters.

A new, updated edition of the *Address Book of Organisations and Other Institutions Providing Assistance, Support and Protection for the Victims of Domestic Violence* was printed.

A public competition was launched, entitled *The city and the county in the fight against domestic violence against women*, with the aim of awarding certificates of recognition to units of local and regional self-government who, during the duration of the Campaign, had made significant steps forward in the area of protection from domestic violence. In 2006, the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia translated and printed 2,000 copies of the *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence*, and 10,000 copies of leaflets with the text of the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, which were distributed to other state bodies, institutions, non-governmental organisations, etc.

Also, as part of the preparations for the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, the Office drew up a Consolidated Report on the Alignment of the Croatian Legislation with the *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence*, based on the reports received from the relevant bodies.

In addition, in 2006, in response to an invitation from the Austrian Minister for Health and Women, Ms. Marie Rauch-Kallat, and on the occasion of the Austrian presidency of the European Union, the Head of the Office, Ms. Helena Štimac Radin participated in a ministerial conference in Brussels, *Joint Action of Member States against Harmful Traditions*. The Office expressed interest in joining the international Network Against Harmful Traditions (NAHT).

In 2007, the Office for Gender Equality, in co-operation with representatives of NGOs and local self-government, formed a Working Group to perform analysis of and plan action to suppress all forms of violence against women. This included compiling statistical data, and the Working Group then produced the *Draft Proposal for a Protocol on Handling Cases of Sexual Violence*. In addition, the *Draft Action Plan for Suppressing all Forms of Violence against Women* is currently being produced.

Within international co-operation, the Republic of Croatia co-operates on a regular basis with the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men, to which it submits regular reports on the implementation in the Republic of Croatia of the *Recommendation Rec(2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence*.

In June 2007, the Council of Europe *Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* was ratified, and measures from the *Operational Plans for Eliminating Trafficking in Human Beings* are being implemented on an ongoing basis. The last report on the implementation of the *Operational Plan* for 2007 was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia during its session held on 26 October 2008.

The Government of Croatia's Office for Human Rights is working systematically to eradicate trafficking in human beings, and its contribution to raising awareness of these problems includes conducting public campaigns, running seminars, workshops and training sessions.

State administration bodies regularly provide financial support for the work of NGOs engaged in eliminating domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, and in improving the position of victims of violence, and for those which organise and hold various forms of training for expert staff working with the victims of domestic violence, or other forms of violence against women.

Various other forms of co-operation between state administration bodies and NGOs enhance indirectly the publication of educational material on all forms of violence against women, which is further distributed to the wider public.

In addition, the wider public is continually informed about the need to improve the position of women victims of violence, and state administration bodies, in co-operation with other state bodies and NGOs, continue to co-operate actively in marking 22 September (National Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and other dates linked to promoting human rights and improving the position of the victims of domestic violence.

Research is carried out regularly into the problems of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, and into improving the position of the victims of violence.

6. WOMEN AND HEALTH

Arising from the obligations in implementing the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality, there has been a marked advance in improving standards in women's healthcare.

The Croatian National Institute of Public Health systematically compiles, monitors and processes statistics linked to health indicators by sex, on hospital stays, deaths, health workers, all newborns by weight and sex, perinatal deaths, injuries in the workplace and occupational diseases. Statistics according to sex are published in the Croatian Health Statistical Yearbook.

As part of the *National Programme for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer*, an information leaflet entitled "Early detection of breast cancer – What every woman should know" has been printed and distributed to all women receiving an invitation to go for a mammogram (up to now, all women born between 1937 and 1941, and 1950 and 1955). Within the *National Programme for the Early Detection of Colon Cancer*, an information leaflet with instructions has also been printed and sent to all those who have so far received invitation to take part in screening (all those born between 1933 and 1937). With the aim of informing the public of the significance for public health of the national programme for the early detection of cancer, there has been a series of TV and radio programmes, press conferences, public forums and meetings with NGOs.

It has already become a tradition to celebrate "Daffodil Day", which aims to make women aware of the importance of detecting breast cancer early, and which stages appropriate events with media coverage. There is also "Mimosa Day", which informs women of the importance of detecting cervical cancer early on. A programme for the early detection of cervical cancer is planned, along with the programmes for the early detection of breast cancer and colon cancer. These programmes will cover the entire population of defined age groups, in accordance with European Commission recommendations, which means women aged between 50 and 69, in the case of breast cancer, and men and women aged between 50 and 74, in the case of colon cancer. Invitations are being sent out according to a planned schedule, by

year of birth. Persons who are discovered to have pathological changes are guaranteed further free diagnosis and treatment.

On the Basic and the Supplementary Reimbursement List of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute, there are some medicinal products intended to protect women from unwanted pregnancy, and intended to alleviate the symptoms of menopause.

During 2006 and 2007, educational seminars entitled "*New findings in the area of adolescent reproductive health*", organised by the Schools Medicine Service of the Croatian National Institute of Public Health, the Croatian Society for School and University Medicine and County Public Health Institutes, with the aim of increasing awareness among school doctors of the importance and presence of reproductive health problems among primary and secondary schoolchildren and university students, equipping doctors to detect problems quickly and more easily, and offer solutions, with the emphasis on developing preventive activities. There were educational seminars for school doctors and other experts, and education packs were produced and distributed, intended for school doctors to use in their everyday work.

A programme to fight, i.e. to suppress and eliminate sexually transmitted diseases is being carried out in line with the *Programme of Measures for Health Protection* and the *National Programme for Eliminating HIV/AIDS*, which include measures for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, and special programmes which are being implemented in co-operation with civil associations. Special programmes for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS are: a programme to increase the availability of voluntary HIV counselling and testing, by setting up a network of centres for voluntary, anonymous, free counselling (with no need for a doctor's referral) on protection measures for preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and on HIV testing; and harm reduction and outreach programmes in areas with populations exhibiting risky behaviour in terms of HIV and other blood-transmitted infections.

Health education concerning sexuality, including protection from all sexually transmitted diseases, is being carried out in primary and secondary schools, according to the Programme of Measures for Health Protection, and within the framework of the regular activities of the Schools Medicine Service, and through special programmes in co-operation with civil associations. School doctors provide health education for almost 400,000 children in primary and secondary schools, usually on topics in the areas of maturing sexually, reproductive health and preventing addictive forms of behaviour. Over 6,800 primary school pupils and 9,000 secondary school pupils have sought advice or counselling in schools

medicine counselling centres, on issues related specifically to reproductive health. These counselling centres operate as part of regular activities carried out by schools medicine services. Special counselling centres for reproductive health were established in the City of Zagreb, Rijeka and Split, with the support of the local community. These counselling centres function on the open door principle, and are located in the schools medicine services in public health institutes. All use the services of gynaecologists, as the implementers of measures to protect reproductive health.

7. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

On the basis of the obligations laid down in the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality, a significant progress has been achieved in establishing and strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality at the national and local levels, and their co-operation has been improved.

The Committee on Gender Equality of the Croatian Parliament, the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Office for Gender Equality of the Croatian Government co-operate on a regular basis and jointly participate in a large number of events, including forums, roundtable discussions, public debates, etc. They also co-operate in efforts relating to drafting legal acts in this area. The Committee on Gender Equality has held topical sessions on the implementation of the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality, the new gender Equality Act, the position of women on the labour market, political participation of women in local elections, the Croatian Television's report on the promotion of gender equality and other topics. These sessions were regularly attended by the Ombudsman for Gender Equality, the Head of the Office for Gender Equality of the Croatian Government, gender equality co-ordinators in state administration bodies, and presidents of committees and commission on gender equality at the local level.

The Office for Gender Equality has been providing ongoing support to gender equality co-ordinators in state administration bodies and has monitored their work. By sending them publications and international documents in the area of gender equality and by inviting them to various events (seminars, roundtable discussions, forums, etc.) on a regular basis, the office has contributed to raising the level of their education, expertise and information. In 2008, the Office organised two training seminars for gender equality co-ordinators at which they were encouraged to exchange good practice examples and to continue developing their networks.

The topics of these seminars included gender mainstreaming in public administration, the role of co-ordinators in implementing the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Act. In certain ministries, broader working groups/commissions for gender mainstreaming have been founded.

Last year, the seminar "Legal Provisions on Gender Equality" was introduced at the Centre for Professional Training and Development within the Central State Office for Public Administration, offering yet another opportunity to spread knowledge on gender equality to a wider circle of civil servants.

Significant progress has been achieved at the regional and local self-government level, where continuous efforts have been invested during the past period to strengthen the capacity of local commissions for gender equality. Gender equality commissions have been established and operate in all counties, as working and advisory bodies to county assemblies and the Assembly of the City of Zagreb.

The new Gender Equality Act provides that units of regional self-government and the City of Zagreb shall establish county commissions for gender equality and the gender equality commission of the City of Zagreb, respectively, and shall provide these commissions with the necessary facilities and means, according to their proposed programmes of work, with the aim of promoting gender equality on local level, and the implementation of that Act and the National Policy for Promoting Gender Equality. Funds allocated in county budgets for activities of gender equality commissions have increased in the past three years, and in 2008 they increased on average 11% compared to the previous reporting period.

A large number of units of local self-government have founded municipal and town commissions for gender equality with the aim of promoting the equality between women and men at the local level. County commissions collaborate with municipal and town commissions for gender equality by providing them with publications, brochures and other promotional and information material, by inviting them to their public events, roundtable discussions, sessions, meetings and other events.

A database of all county, municipal and town commissions for gender equality, including their contact details, is accessible via the website of the Office for Gender Equality. In addition, the website of the Office for Gender Equality contains a link entitled "Work of local commissions", which provides information on all the activities implemented by these commissions.

The Office for Gender Equality maintains regular co-operation with county commissions for gender equality, and co-ordinates their work. As part of this co-operation,

training activities are organised, through which county commissions are regularly provided with publications and other promotional and information material issued by the Office and invited to public events organised by the Office, and the Office participates in the activities organised by county commissions for gender equality. With a view to strengthening and networking county commissions for gender equality, and enabling the exchange of their experiences and plans for further activities, every year the Office for Gender Equality of the Croatian Government organises *Co-ordination meetings of county commissions for gender equality*, attended by representatives of county commissions for gender equality.