

## **BULGARIA NATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

(In implementation of the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria undertaken at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995)

The final documents (Declaration and Platform for Action) adopted with consensus at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women (September 1995, Beijing), denote a culmination of the noble efforts of the UN and the multitude of women's non-governmental organizations dedicated to the cause of women's rights. This stage in the process of strengthening gender equality has been preceded by long years of efforts on behalf of the international community for recognition and achievement of legal and actual equality of women and men, dated back since the founding of the UN fifty years ago.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 outlined the need for recognition of women's rights as an integral part of the complex of universal human rights and the related freedoms, such as: democratic state system, political pluralism, free and democratic elections, division of power, market economy, role and contribution of nongovernmental organizations, empowerment of women in all domains of life, in particular in the process of decision making in the political, economic and social spheres of life. Last but not least comes the importance assigned to the sexual and reproductive rights of women.

The National Action Plan has been designed for implementation of the moral and political commitments undertaken by the Republic of Bulgaria at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, September 1995, Beijing, China.

The National Action Plan is based on:

- . Strategic objectives and measures set forth in the final documents adopted by the Conference - the Declaration and the Platform for Action;
- . The Government policy for social and economic development of this country, the Government current plans and priorities for legislative initiatives;
- . Traditions and specific characteristics of the status of women in society, the new situation and problems related to the transition from one to another social formation, different in principle;
- . The progress on problems pertaining to gender equality and equitable treatment of women in Bulgaria, in the legislative and other regulative acts currently in force in this country, on the one hand, and on the other hand - the actual status of women in the various spheres of social life;
- . Development of the international cooperation and the national policy for active participation in the European and international organizations and structures;
- . The proposals of various women's NGOs in this country.

The objectives, the tasks and the concrete measures are in conformity also with the international commitments of this country and documents adopted by the UN, the Council of Europe, and others such as:

- . The Charter of the United Nations (pursuant to Article 56 the member-countries undertake the obligation to take measures on national and international levels, inclusive of such pertaining to gender equality);
- . The Universal Declaration on Human Rights;
- . The Convention on Political Rights of Women;

- . The Convention on Citizenship of Married Women;
- . The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others;
- . The ILO Convention (No. 100) on Gender Equality in the Sphere of Labour;
- . The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, etc.;
- . The final documents adopted at the UN World Conferences on Women in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi(1985);
- . The final documents adopted at the UN Conference in Copenhagen(1995) on social development, etc.

The preparation of the National Action Plan, and the long-term objectives and strategies in particular, have taken in consideration the trends and practices in developed industrial countries for solving problems related to equitable treatment and the achievement of legal as well as actual equality of women and men.

THE MAIN GOAL OF THE MEASURES IS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF REAL EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN ALL SPHERES OF SOCIAL LIFE ON THE BASIS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REAFFIRMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC CIVIL SOCIETY.

According to the final documents adopted by the World Conference on Women, the basic strategic objectives and priorities, set forth therein are as follows:

- . Ensuring and protection of the rights of women as an integral part of human rights. Achievement of equality of men and women.
- . Ensuring the rights of women in the spheres of labour, social security and social assistance, as well as adherence to actions for Implementation of such rights.
- . Ensuring equal access of women to economic and political power through their integration in the decision making processes at all levels of economic, political and social life.
- . Reduction of unemployment rates and increasing the employment of women.
- . Reduction and eradication of poverty and improvement of the social assistance and welfare.
- . Integration of women in activities related to protection of the environment.
- . Ensuring equal access of women to education and upgrading the vocational training and qualifications of women and girls.
- . Ensuring equal access of women to health and medical services.
- . Prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women.
- . Professional realization of women working in the sphere of culture.
- . Improving the role of the mass media for achievement of full and true equality of women.
- . Development of cooperation and interaction with non-governmental organizations of women.

## I. ACTIVITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## A. Protection of women's rights and their equality in society

### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Adoption of National Action Plan for protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, inclusive of in respect of women, in conformity with the recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights.

1.2. Establishment of a system for reporting on equality of women and entering the respective information on this aspect of human rights in all periodic reports on implementation of international agreements on human rights, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party.

1.3. Support to the process of elaboration and legal recognition, within the Council of Europe, of the right of women and men to equality.

1.4. Improving the availability of information and legal education in respect of human rights, taking in consideration the aspect of gender equality in the Government administration, mostly in the law enforcement bodies, the penitentiaries, the health establishments personnel, etc.

1.5. Review of the national legislation from the perspective of ensuring equality of men and women.

1.6. Strict implementation of international commitments undertaken by the Republic of Bulgaria in respect of gender equality in society.

1.7. Establishment of an institution (committee, sub-committee) on problems of gender equality with the National Assembly.

### 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Preparation and submission to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of periodic reports by the Republic of Bulgaria on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in compliance with the instructions of the Committee.

2.2. Support to the proposals of the Committee for the elimination of discrimination against women, pertaining to improving the performance and efficiency within its mandate at the UN General Assembly and at meetings of the Convention member-countries, including the amendment to Article 20, paragraph (1), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2.3. Support to the initiative of the UN Commission on the Status of Women for elaboration of Facultative Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with regards to the authority of the Committee to receive and consider appeals and statements by individuals and nongovernmental organizations about violations of women's rights.

2.4. Confirmation of the statement for need of universalization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and timely preparation and submission of the periodic reports of the Republic of Bulgaria on implementation of the above Convention.

## B. Ensuring the rights of women in the sphere of labour, social security and social assistance

### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Gradual equalization of the rights of men and women in Bulgaria in the field of insurance legislation.

1.2. Improving the access of women to the labour market.

### 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Submission to the National Assembly of a Bill on health insurance, governing the right to provision of medical service and cash compensations in the event of temporary work disability(inclusive of the events of pregnancy and childbirth).

2.2. Establishment of "Ailment and Maternity" Fund with the National Insurance Institute.

2.3. Submission to the National Assembly of a Bill on support to families and children, governing the universalization and uniform state financing of family allowances for all women, regardless of their insurance status.

2.4. Establishment of centralized "Family Assistance\* Fund, financed by the state budget.

2.5. Submission to the National Assembly of a new Bill on pensions, designed to reduce (eliminate) the difference in retirement ages for men and women.

2.6. Stimulation of families by introducing tax reliefs for children and unemployed through amendments to the Personal Income Tax Act.

2.7. Improvement of statistics on labour accidents by addition of data about women.

C. Equal access of women to the political, economic and social life in Bulgaria

#### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Elaboration of Programme for ensuring equal access of women to economic and political power, for the purpose of initial attainment of the 30 % threshold of women's participation in senior positions, which shall enable them to take part in economic and political decision making and to influence the nature of the key decisions adopted.

1.2. Exercising of systematic control and evaluation of the implementation of the Programme for ensuring equal access of women to economic and political power.

1.3. Establishment of regulative bodies and mechanisms for practical implementation of such control.

1.4. Creating conditions for partnership and equal opportunities for both spouses in providing the family income and in bringing up and education of children as well, in view of support for more active participation of women in social life and government.

1.5. Adoption of measures for selection of women from all over the country, who have the necessary qualifications for senior positions. The relevant information should be maintained and updated in a specialized data base.

1.6. Elaboration of programmes for career development of women of all ages, including career planning, tutorship, instructions, vocational training and retraining.

#### 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Conducting systematic research, studies and analyses of public opinion, for the purpose of evaluating the relationship between high work load of women on the one hand, and their patterns of behaviour in respect of fertility and their role as mentors of the young generation on the other hand, in order to provide conditions for women to choose on their own the periods and forms of their professional engagements and their development as full members of a modern civil society.

2.2. Introduction of rules for providing a quota for participation of women on delegations to fora of the UN and other international organizations.

D. Increase of employment and reduction of unemployment among women

## 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Providing Incentives to employers to assign women to appropriate Jobs, through tax reliefs, introduction of quota principles for hiring new employees, etc.

1.2. Introduction of measures for combining the labour activity of women with maternity, inclusive of more comprehensive use of flexible forms of employment, including also elaboration of National Programme for part-time (hour-based) employment of women

1.3. Development of a network of services providing additional vocational training for reintroduction of women to the labour market.

## 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Submission to the National Assembly of a Bill on insurance against unemployment, promotion of employment and vocational training.

2.2. Establishment of mechanisms for stimulating the application of "flexible forms of employment", which will enable both women and men to combine their productive and family obligations: reduced working hours, hour-based employment, employment at home, etc.

2.3. Introduction of active measures on the labour market, taking In consideration the problems of unemployment among women; stimulation of entrepreneurship and self-employment, especially for young women; training and retraining of young mothers, etc.

2.4. Introduction of measures for enhancing the access of women to vocational training and to means for self-employment.

## E. Reducing the poverty among women and improvement of social assistance and social welfare

### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Development of Programme for curbing the poverty among women, inclusive of through the socio-economic policies on income and a National Programme for part-time (hour-based) employment of women.

1.2. Expansion of the range of services for rehabilitation and social integration of physically disabled women, elimination of transport and architectural obstacles, access to services in the sphere of culture, etc.

1.3. Introduction with priority of alternative forms of social services and reintegration of various dependent groups of women, inclusive of elderly women.

1.4. Improvement of the material base and stimulating of new, more flexible forms of social services.

### 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Conducting a representative survey of poverty In Bulgaria, inclusive of poverty among women (rates, reasons, characteristics), as well as monitoring of poverty on regional level.

2.2. Submission to the National Assembly of a Bill on social welfare designed to guarantee the right to social assistance and services to the benefit of risk groups with persistent social problems, inclusive of such of women.

2.3. Updating the regulative provisions on target and additional benefits for families exposed to social risks.

2.4. Development of a pilot programme for centralized settlement of payments with the National Energy Company in regions with compact Romany population.

2.5. Updating of regulative provisions pertaining to support for obtaining of medicines and foods with curative properties.

2.6. Preparation of mechanisms for tax reliefs and Government procurement orders for employers of the physically disabled and for specialized enterprises which employ physically disabled women as well.

2.7. Granting of universal allowance for integration, designated to cover all additional expenses for transport, communications and rehabilitation services to more than 100 000 physically disabled women.

2.8. Balanced distribution of social welfare establishments according to the needs for social services by regions and centralized financing of establishments with inter-municipal functions.

2.9. Stimulation for development of the network of establishments for children and women counselling.

2.10. Amendment to the Tariff of Local Fees under the Local Taxes and Fees Act, intended to stimulate the establishment and attendance of various forms of daycare for handicapped children.

F. Upgrading the vocational training and qualifications of women and girls In Bulgaria. Ensuring equal access of women to education

#### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Elaboration of a Programme for upgrading the legal education of girls and women, as well as a programme for family education.

1.2. Training of girls and women in the specifics of government operations, public statements, conducting of political campaigns, etc.

1.3. Establishment of quotas for girls by professions, mostly assumed as professions for men, such as: information technology, precision mechanical and optical engineering, entrepreneurship, management, construction, mechanical engineering, chemical industry, etc.

1.4. Providing extensive Information to women and girls about their rights, by enrollment to classes in human rights within the curricula of high schools and higher education establishments.

1.5. Development of a network of Youth Information and Counselling Offices (YICO), which covers also problems of women.

1.6. Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its introduction for study in high schools.

#### 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Development and stabilization of the education system, including an Act on Amendments to the People's Education Act.

2.2. Elaboration of Concept for the development of secondary education, as well as:

. Programme for application of the Concept for the development of secondary education;

. Methodology for elaboration of State educational requirements;

. Guidelines for organization of extra-curricular and extra-school activities of pupils, inclusive of such of girls;

. Guidelines for the contents and organization of activities of class/course tutors in Bulgarian schools, designed to revive the traditions of our schools in developing amateur art activities, mass pupil sports and tourism; education of citizens-patriots.

2.3. Incorporation in the List of professions for training mostly of women business-secretaries, seamstresses – professions in the sphere of services, hotel administration, etc., in view of expansion of the opportunities for enrolment of more girls in the training process and also considering the transition to market economy.

2.4. Development of pre-vocational training at secondary general schools and development of programmes for professional fields enabling most of the girls to acquire general modern economic literacy; formation of skills for economical and efficient management of the family budget; skills for proper economic choice, etc.

2.5. Programmes for acquiring professional qualifications after secondary education within the system of vocational education, such that offer qualifications according to the demand on the labour market and the needs of the person, in the fields of clothes making, housekeeping; chambermaids, waitresses, cooks, salespersons, etc.

2.6. Conducting of sociological survey "Bulgarian youth in the environment of transition".

2.7. Organization of training in carpet making, weaving, knitting, sewing, family tourism, etc., in view of meeting the needs for education and as response to the demand of the labour market, as well as preservation of old-time Bulgarian crafts for girls and women in small and mountain community systems.

2.8. Organization of the elaboration of special textbooks and teaching facilities for teaching of Bulgarian language in primary education of Romany children.

2.9. Bringing the wages of pedagogical staff in compliance with their work and the social importance of their professions.

G. Ensuring full and adequate participation of women in environment protection and reduction of ecological risks to their health

#### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Ensuring full access of women to management of the environment.

1.1.1. Preparation of Regulation for participation of the public in the process of decision making pertaining to the environment and for access to ecological information. A work group shall be established for that purpose, with participation of non-governmental organizations.

1.2. Expansion and improving the efficiency of ecological training and education.

1.2.1. Elaboration of National Strategy for ecological training and education by an interdepartmental advisory group. One of the major emphases of this strategy should be the ecological training of women and the promotion of their educative role in respect of environment protection.

1.2.2. Elaboration of training and supporting written materials for ecological training of pupils in primary and secondary schools.

1.2.3. Enhancing the role and improving the quality of ecological training in higher education schools.

1.2.4. Conducting of large-scale public campaigns on environment issues under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment. The first campaign is expected to be on "Ecology In Bulgarian homes", elucidating issues such as: safe use of household chemical preparations; eventual hazards related to the use of dyes, varnishes, glues, etc., and their prevention or neutralization; economical use of

electrical power; ionizing and non-ionizing types of radiation in the home and their effect on human health; methods for filtration of potable water; the role of green plants in the home, etc.

1.3. Study of the expertise of JICA - the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, with which the Ministry of Environment keeps close relations. This Agency has launched the programme "Participation of Women in the Process of Environment Protection", applied with success in Japan. JICA could eventually finance the development and implementation of similar programme in Bulgaria.

## 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Conducting sociological surveys, focused on the attitude of women towards environmental problems.

2.2. Promoting the participation of women in activities related to environment protection, through elaboration of programmes and projects for Involvement of women in protection of nature, ecological tourism, planting, ecologically-oriented agriculture, etc.

2.2.1. The project "Women in Defence of Biological Diversity" (in their capacity of educators and keepers of traditional knowledge), which could be integrated in the Bulgarian-Swiss programme "Biological Diversity" launched by the Ministry of Environment, as well as the project "Protection of the Biological Diversity in the Central Balkan Mountain and the Rila Mountain", funded by the GEF.

2.2.2 International project of the Ministry of Environment "Agro-ecology water quality in the basin of Yantra River", financed by the USAID, including training of women from rural areas for proper composting of green waste, household waste and manure. This could result in the prevention of additionally introduced pollution from agricultural activities, i.e. it could provide a basis for development of ecologically-oriented agriculture in Bulgaria.

2.2.3. Development of a project "Involvement of unemployed women in ecological activities" together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, aimed at providing opportunities for seasonal employment of unemployed women in planting and cleaning activities, gathering of mushrooms or curative plants, activities related to ecological tourism, etc.

## 2.3. Provision of healthy environment.

2.3.1. Alleviation of hazardous environmental impacts on the health of children and the health and fertility of women through the introduction of integrated measures for Improvement of the ecological situation in this country.

2.3.2. Preparation and integration of a project entitled "Children's Ecology" in the National Action Plan "Environment and Health", in two major stages: Stage 1 - development of a system of ecological parameters pertaining to the health of children, and Stage 2 - application of developed system for making complex evaluation of the health of children in various selected regions in the country, exposed to ecological hazards.

2.3.3. Encouraging the production of clean and ecologically-compliant products by elaboration of Regulation for labelling of ecologically clean goods in compliance with the requirements of Article 14 and Article 24, sub-paragraph 7 of the EPA), and to regulate in particular (as initial stage) the certification, for example, of child foods, cosmetics and chemical preparations used in the home.

## H. Ensuring equal access of women to health care and medical services

### 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Preservation of the reproductive health of women, increase of birth rates.

1.2. Reduction of morbidity rates in respect of widely spread diseases: cardiovascular and malignant diseases.



1.3. Development of health care structures.

2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Dissemination of health knowledge in the field of family planning, inclusive of providing contraceptives and measures against too early pregnancy.

2.2. Improving the operation of women counselling establishments.

2.3. Development of genetic screening.

2.4. Providing conditions for quality obstetric care.

2.5. Development of screening methods for early detection of diseases.

2.6. Improvement of the quality of life through reduction of hazardous habits, rational feeding and optimum motory behaviour.

2.7. Providing affordable and qualified medical care.

1. Prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and by women

1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Elaboration of National Programme Against Crime, with special focus on women as subjects and objects of criminal acts.

1.2. Conducting of large-scale sociological survey of crimes against women.

2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Submission to the National Assembly of a Bill on Amendments to the Ministry of Interior Act.

2.2. Condemnation of all forms of violence against women, inclusive of such in the family, as violation of their rights and fundamental freedoms.

2.3. Providing better information availability to the specialized units of the MI, by means of subscriptions for Western publications, providing printed materials and films in the language of the original for the purpose of upgrading the qualifications of the personnel, etc.

2.4. Reinstatement of traditions in shooting practice for female employees within the system of the Ministry of Interior.

J. Solving the problems of women related to gender equality in society, with the peaceful means of culture and cultural interaction

1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Rendering assistance for peaceful settlement of conflicts and for establishment of peace, as well as for fostering tolerance with the support of education, programmes for cultural exchange between young people and between young women in particular.

1.2. Providing incentives for research on issues of peace, as well as the participation of women in national, regional and International peace movements

1.3. Influence on peace processes through work in the sphere of mutual knowledge of foreign cultures.

1.4. Formation of unconventional mechanisms (mostly cultural) for prevention of violence and settlement of conflicts.

## 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Organization and dissemination of studies of the disastrous consequences of armed conflicts in respect of women.

2.2. Examination of opportunities for elaboration of curricula for children aimed at popularization of world culture, in order to rear a spirit of tolerance at the youngest age.

2.3. Promotion of inter-cultural contacts in line with bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as the most efficient way to organize encounters between different value systems, designed to overcome xenophobia, racism and religious bigotry, which are major threats to peace.

## K. Improving the role of the mass media for achievement of full and true gender equality

1. Elaboration of Strategy in the field of communications and the mass media for comprehensive discussion on the new relationships between men and women in society and in the family.

L. Cooperation and interaction with non-governmental women's and other organizations for solving the problems of women

## 1. Long-term tasks

1.1. Adoption of legislative measures against all forms of violence against women, with the active participation of women's NGOs, etc.

1.2. Establishment of a contact group, comprising representatives of the Government, the NGOs and the representative missions of international inter-governmental organizations to Bulgaria.

1.3. Preparation of a Regulation together with non-governmental ecological organizations, governing the participation of the public in the process of decision making relevant to the environment and the access to ecological information.

## 2. Mid-term tasks

2.1. Conducting of national and regional discussions on the problems of:

- . sexual and reproductive health of women;
- . employment, unemployment and professional realization;
- . rights of women and the problems of equality of men and women.

2.2. Development and implementation of National Programme for Action as a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action.

2.3. The process of elaboration of reports by the Republic of Bulgaria on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should account for, to the maximum degree possible, the opinions and proposals of NGOs and should utilize data provided by them.

2.4. Construction of shelters for temporary admission of women subjected to violence, inclusive of women of Romany origin.

2.5. Participation in joint projects of the UNDP, The PHARE Programme, activities in the CE, etc.

2.6. Implementation of tripartite project "Against all forms of violence against women" (under "LIEN" Programme of the EU).

2.7. Participation in the European Union Programme "Youth of Europe", covering youth exchange and mobility, inclusive of these of girls.

2.8. Implementation of project "Actions for survival, protection and development of underage and minor girls in the environment of social transition" (Union for protection of children).

2.9. Development of criteria and rules for quality of social activities, both for Government and non-governmental structures in the field of social services.

2.10. Establishment of centralized fund with the MLSW, which shall provide financial support to the activities of non-governmental organizations.

The Republic of Bulgaria needs Institutional mechanisms for providing equal opportunities to women and men, not only because the above ensues from the commitments of this country by virtue of the Regional and Global Platform for Action and its capacity of associated member of the European Union, but because many years of practice of formal equality could not eradicate the various forms of gender discrimination in labour relations, social security and access of women to economic resources. This is a major problem concerning more than half of the population, and the first step towards its solution should be its clear formulation and recognition. In this respect the Government is called to take steps for making the following amendments to the laws of this country:

1. Reinstatement of the text deleted from the Labour Code, which guaranteed the basic principle of equal payment for equal work in terms of value.

2. Ban on competitions for jobs, etc., on employment or dismissal from jobs, which set up representatives of any gender on unequal grounds.

3. Introduction of practices applied by other countries, which put the burden of proof on the employer, in order to provide guarantees for the ban on discrimination.

4. Establishment of swift and flexible system for compensation of victims of gender based discrimination.

5. Recognition of the importance of unpaid labour of mothers and housewives for survival of the nation, by introduction of allowance to pensions for child care, care for sick or elderly member of the family, and by making amendments to the Regulation on leaves for such activities.

6. Incorporation of all forms of violence in the family as sexual harassment under the Penal Code, revision of penalties for "lewdness" and "rape".

In long-term perspective, the following actions should be undertaken:

1. Preparation of long-term strategic plan for achievement of equal opportunities for women and men in Bulgaria.

2. Formation of Commission on gender equality, comprising the social partners and the women. The Commission should have the appropriate authority for supervision, arbitration and education activities.

3. Adoption of measures by the Government with the active participation of NGOs against all forms of violence against women.

4. Formation of a contact group comprising representatives of the Government, the NGOs and the representative missions of international inter-governmental organizations to Bulgaria.

5. Preparation of legislative provisions together with non-governmental ecological organizations, regulating the participation of the public in the process of decision making relevant to the environment and the access to ecological information.

In short-term perspective, the activities should be addressed to:

1. Establishment and financial provision for a separate structure for promotion of equal opportunities for both genders, with the National Council on Social and Demographic Issues. The newly formed institution should work for:

- extensive education campaign for equal opportunities in support of active measures against violence in or out of the home;
- adoption of measures against sexual harassment at the workplace;
- participation of women in decision making;
- development of criteria for evaluating the actual opportunities to both genders in the various spheres of life;
- close cooperation with women's organizations, inclusive of political and other non-governmental organizations.

2. Establishments of structures for promotion of gender equality in the state administration.

3. Introduction of a minimum quota of 30% for participation of representatives of each gender in assignment to state-controlled jobs, career promotions and above all in taking senior positions.

4. Encouraging the introduction of flexible working hours and other measures for combination of employment and family obligations.

5. Development of a modern system for relief support to women and children - victims of violence, and for therapeutic help to men - violators. Conducting of educational campaign, inclusive of in schools and government departments.

6. Improvement of the quality of child day-care establishments, encouraging flexible forms of hour-based care for children of pre-school age and establishment of daycare centers for children with health problems.

7. Expansion of the scope of family planning and sexual health education.

8. Introduction of tax reliefs for employers who hire pregnant women or young mothers.

9. Providing incentives for women's entrepreneurship.

10. Strengthening the links between central and regional structures of administration, as well as relations with local NGOs.

11. Conducting a national discussion on problems of sexual and reproductive health of women.

12. Taking in consideration the proposals of women's NGOs in implementation of the National Programme for Action in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

13. The process of elaboration of reports by the Republic of Bulgaria on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should account for to the maximum degree possible, the opinions and proposals of NGOs and should utilize data provided by them.

14. Construction of shelters for temporary admission of women subjected to violence, inclusive of women of Romany origin.

15. Participation in joint projects of the UNDP, the PHARE Programme, activities in the CE, etc.

16. Development of criteria and rules for the quality of social activities, both for state controlled and non-governmental structures, which provide social services and reliefs to the benefit of children and the family.

17. Development of a programme for religious education of women, implemented in partnership with women's NGOs and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as a most efficient way to overcome religious bigotry, racism and xenophobia.

18. Establishment of Center for non-governmental women's organizations - "House of Women".

19. Establishment of centralized Fund with the MLSW for financial support to the activities of non-governmental organizations.

II. Projects pertaining to the rights and problems of women, currently developed together with non-governmental organizations and International organizations

1. Project "Initiatives for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Bulgaria" providing for the issue of 10 information brochures on the individual topics of the Platform.

2. Project "New perspectives to women", aimed at promotion of women's entrepreneurship against unemployment.

3. Project for investigation and restriction of violence against women in Bulgaria. This projects provides for cooperation with all concerned institutions and persons, exchange of information, training of specialists.

4. Project for review and proposals for amendments to the legislation, in view of the more comprehensive application of the international instruments on v omen's rights in Bulgaria.

5. "Women in transition" (PHARE project for Bulgaria and the Czech Republic).

6. Project "Unemployment among women" (LIEN Programme).

7. "Participation of women in social and political life" (PHARE Programme).

8. "Women on the Balkan Peninsula and Creativity" (Programme "Thessalonike - Cultural Center of Europe").

9. Establishment in Bulgaria of an Information Center about participation of women in business and tourism.

10. UNDP Project "Gender in development".

The above projects are being implemented by the Bulgarian Association of Women of the Legal Profession, the Women's Democratic Union, the Bulgarian Union of Women, in close cooperation with the Bulgarian Government (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Justice), international women's organizations, the PHARE Programme - UEN, the "Development of Civil Society" Foundation, the American Law Enforcement Organization, etc.

III. Institutions and mechanisms for implementation and control

The implementation of the National Action Plan requires that both Government organizations and non-governmental organizations and other institutions in this country operate jointly and separately.

The major institutions playing key roles in the implementation of the strategic objectives and priorities are:

1. The National Assembly - for adoption of the relevant Acts and the ratification of various international conventions, for compliance of adopted Acts and other decisions with gender equality.

2. The Government - for development and implementation of: the National Action Plan, inclusive of strategies, bills and other regulative acts, programmes and projects.
3. The judicial branch - for struggle against violence, crime, discrimination.
4. The non-governmental organizations - for preparation, control of implementation and realization of the National Plan.
5. Trade-union organizations, inclusive of Commissions with them for protection of the rights and interests of working women and young people, and the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation.
6. Expert-advisory board on problems of women, with the NCSDI.

#### IV. RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ADOPTED MEASURES

##### 1. National resources

##### 1.1. Human and other resources (Inclusive of financial resources) of state Institutions

The economy of this country was marked in 1995 by the appearance of positive trends. There was noted recovery of production (production in terms of comparable prices on 1994 was up by 7%; the growth rate of industrial output on 1994 was up by 5%). Sales of goods on the domestic market increased by 3% compared to 1994. The foreign trade balances in 1995 were improved. The GDP growth rate in 1995 was 2.6% compared to 1.8% in 1994. Unemployment gradually decreased. The projected GDP growth rate for 1996 was 3%. In 1996 however economic decline is expected, and this trend will continue in the following years. The inflation rate in late 1995 was 32.9% (121.9% in 1994). The annual average inflation rate for 1996 is expected to be 75%. The results for all parameters in 1996 are expected to deteriorate. The trends in the evolution of macroeconomic indices and the real economy are major prerequisites for reduction of poverty, improvement of environment protection, improvement of health care, expansion of the range of state-provided services, growth of employment improvement of the quality of life for all, inclusive of women.

Women in Bulgaria have a guaranteed equitable access to all state resources, and in particular those in the sphere of health care, culture, education and social security. Funds are assigned by activities according to the needs, and not by gender characteristics. For example, monies from the "VTU" Fund are used for payment of cash compensations and social benefits for unemployment to all those in need, regardless of gender. Inasmuch as according to statistical data the relative share of unemployed women is bigger in the total number of unemployed (55.7%), they receive more cash from the Fund. The monies provided by the Fund for training and retraining are used more actively by women. Unemployed women who have completed training courses account for 77.7% of the total number of persons who have completed such courses.

Apart from the equitable participation of women in the use of state resources in all spheres of the sociopolitical and economic life of this country, women also receive some specific benefits pursuant to the Labour Code and the Decree on Encouraging Births.

Types of Benefits	Expenses are on the account of
Compensation for pregnancy and childbirth	Social security, national budget, local budgets
Payments for wage difference in transfer of pregnant women to appropriate work	Social security
Lump sum allowances for childbirth	Social security and budgets
Compensation for child care	National budget, social security, local budgets

Monthly child allowances	National budget, social security, local budgets
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The expenses of local budgets for the above benefits increased in absolute terms in 1996 compared to 1995.

Expenses of local budgets	1995	1996
Lump sum allowances for childbirth	67.8	93.8
Compensation for child care	1882.7	2723.8
Monthly child allowances	506.8	543.1

The expenses of the social security budget for the above benefits also increased in absolute terms in 1996 compared to 1995, and their share in the total of benefits was retained.

Expenses for the social security (1)	1995	1996
Compensation for pregnancy and childbirth	706.7	1014.5
Payments for wage difference in transfer of pregnant women to appropriate work	1.6	2.5
Lump sum allowances for childbirth	136.9	209.4
Compensation for child care	1637.2	2404.0
Monthly child allowances	6721.3	10061.1

(1) State Gazette, No. 68/09.08.1996.

## 2. Resources from international organizations

1. On the insistence of the countries from the East European regional group the Beijing Platform comprised paragraphs by virtue of which assistance and cooperation should be provided for countries with economies in transition, inclusive of from international financial institutions, for the purpose of achievement of the objectives set forth in the Platform. On these grounds our country turned to individual organizations and programmes within the UN system, for financing of certain projects, mostly seminars, dedicated to issues pertaining to women. Considering the current financial state of the UN, financing from the funds of the world organization could hardly be expected in the near future.

Nevertheless, there are possibilities for financing of specific projects by the UNDP, which has a representative mission in Sofia, the World Bank, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

2. With respect to the Council of Europe a request has already been placed for providing funds to finance the holding of a seminar in Sofia on issues related to violence against women, in June or September this year. The request has been accepted, but the funds have not been approved yet.

3. The greatest possibilities for financing of projects on issues related to women are provided on the side of the European Union within the PHARE Programme. Furthermore, according to information from Greece, the European Union intends to allocate a special fund for support to countries from

Central and East Europe for implementation of projects oriented towards implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

4. The projects pertaining to the introduction of new types of social services, will need financial investments and counselling in the course of their organization. Therefore they have been put forward for financing by international organizations. The UN Development Programme has stated its willingness to finance projects with objectives coinciding with the priorities of the Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. In this respect it has been put forward to develop a project for establishment of network of shelters for temporary admission of women.

5. Work is under way on the project "Women in Development", which is being implemented by the MLSW together with the UNDP. It provides for organization of a seminar on implementation of the Beijing Platform, the Government measures undertaken as a follow-up to the Beijing Conference, as well as the publication of directory of women's non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria.

6. On the side of the UNDP work has started on the project "Gender in Development". A seminar is forthcoming - "The gender approach - a policy of equal opportunities for women and men and achievement of sustainable human development". This is a large-scale project, which will be realized jointly with the UNDP, the MLSW and local non-governmental organizations. The realization of the project in turn requires implementation of pilot projects on the gender approach, such as: Rural tourism and management of family hotels (Momchilovtsi); Crafts and unique manufacturing (Levchovo); Establishment of information center in Smolyan; Manufacturing through Leasing (Dolna Mitropolia); Technical assistance for small enterprises (Lovech); Providing employment for youths from risk and ethnic groups in crisis situation.

The National Action Plan has been approved at session of the National Council on Social and Demographic Issues with the Council of Ministers on 2 July 1996.

Source: *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs:*  
<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf177/natrep/nap1996-bulgaria.htm>