

Oral statement
of Womens Lobby of Slovenia representatives
Dunja Obersnel Kveder and Špela Veselič

Thank you very much madam chair. My name is Špela Veselič and my colleague, sitting next to me is Dunja Obersnel Kveder. We are representing Womens Lobby of Slovenia, member of the European Womens Lobby. Our shadow report was prepared by four NGOs, one institute and one individual expert.

We will speak only about presently the most outstanding issues for Slovenia. In our speech we will tackle gender equality mechanisms, political representation of women, violence against women and sexual and reproductive health rights. These issues are essential for all women in Slovenia, but even more for women from different ethnic minorities, like Roma women, women at risk of poverty, young women, etc.

On the issue of Gender equality mechanisms

Gender equality mechanisms at the local level in Slovenia remained very poor. On the national level governmental Office for Equal Opportunities became weaker partly also due to its transformation to the general antidiscrimination governmental body. Gender equality coordinators in most of the ministries lack power and training, Advocate for equal opportunities of women and men has no real independence or *de facto* power.

In spite of CEDAW Committee previous recommendation, Slovenian government didn't strengthen its Office for equal opportunities nor its work for gender equality. The weakness of the Office for equal opportunities can also be seen in the low influence they have on the political parties. One of their obligations is namely to monitor the action plans of the political parties for equal representation of men and women. This years elections draw a very clear picture of how political parties understand equal representation of women in decision taking.

On the issue of political representation of women

Slovenia has huge democratic deficit in the representation of women in legislative and executive branches of power at all levels.

Quota regulations according to which the minimal legally prescribed limit is 25 % (it was changed from 35 %) of women nominated at the elections at the national level are weak. They are also inefficient as there are no rules concerning gender balance in the electoral units where the parties have the strongest support of their voters. It is therefore almost a rule that the political parties nominate women candidates to the units where they can not get enough support to reach to the national assembly. That way they obey the law but don't improve the position of women in decision taking and decision making.

In this years national elections in average 35 % of women were nominated and only one third of them were nominated in the units where they could get elected. Only two women candidates were nominated in the units where there was a high possibility to be elected. In the end 12 women or 13,3 % of the parliamentarians are women. In the last week also the new leadership of Slovenian National Assembly was elected – the president and vice presidents are all men. We can conclude that this shows the low level of political culture and degrading attitude of parliamentarian parties towards women in politics.

On the issue of Violence against women

In February 2008 Slovenian National Assembly passed a new Family violence prevention act. In spite of CEDAW Committee previous recommendations there is no obligation for the judiciary to educate their officials on the issue of domestic violence, although all the other important state institutions are obliged to do that. The Minister of Justice also isn't obliged to prepare the rules and procedures for the harmonized work of the institutions in the cases of domestic violence, although ministers from the field of social security, police, health and education are obliged to prepare them.

Because of this and also other deficiencies that can be find in our shadow report (on the pages from 22 to 26) the problems of women who are the victims of violence are still not solved in the best possible way for them, and procedures in the institutions are often not victim friendly.

Ladies and gentlemen thank you very much. I will now pass the word to my colleague.

On the issue of sexual and reproductive health rights

I would like to stress that in spite of CEDAW previous recommendations, Slovenian government still did not tackle maternal mortality as was suggested by your committee and therefore in Slovenia maternal mortality is still one of the important issues regarding violation of sexual and reproductive health rights. Maternal mortality rate is constantly above the average when compared with other countries in the EU. Particularly worrying is the fact that maternal mortality rate is rising again. The available data show that average maternal mortality has increased from 12 in years 1995 to 1999 to 15 per 100.000 lb in 2000 – 2002. Moreover, from WHO HFA db it can be seen that maternal mortality rates were 11,2 in 2004 and 16,6 in 2005.

We estimate that the reason for this preventable event is the fact that it is more and more difficult for women to reach the legally prescribed preventive programs on sexual and reproductive health on the primary health care due to increasingly impaired access, lack of surveillance by the Institute of Public Health and inadequate financial assessment. Institute of Public Health also doesn't detect anomalies like limited access to abortion that can contribute to the rise of maternal mortality. Therefore NGOs working in this field detect more and more violations of sexual and reproductive rights of women in Slovenia.

You can find more information on that in our shadow report (on the pages 32 to 35).

Thank you very much.