



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
14 March 2013

English only

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Fifty-fourth session**

Summary record of the 1116th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 21 February 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

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(*continued*)

*Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of
Macedonia (continued)*

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (continued) (CEDAW/C/MKD/4-5 and CEDAW/C/MKD/Q/4-5 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 7 to 9

2. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a number of ethnic Albanian women had been elected to the parliament. There were no Roma women members of parliament. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy regularly carried out campaigns to encourage women from ethnic minorities, including Roma and Albanian women, to engage in political life and take part in decision-making bodies.

3. **Ms. Todorovska** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the level of psychological and social support for victims of gender-based violence provided by social work centres had increased in 2012, covering more than 850 cases. The Courts had also stepped up the number of temporary protection measures imposed, to nearly 225. State shelters had provided accommodation to 27 victims in 2011 and significantly more women in 2012. Non-governmental organizations had also provided shelter to around 85 victims in 2012.

4. The Government had adopted the National Strategy for the Protection against Domestic Violence in 2012. The Government departments had involved the non-governmental sector in developing the National Strategy and would continue to work closely with it in its implementation. In recent weeks, a national coordination body composed of both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders had been created to monitor its application.

Articles 10 to 14

5. **Ms. Acar** said that the delegation should provide data on enrolment, attendance and dropout rates for Roma girls at all levels of education. She requested further information on the percentage of Roma children in special schools as compared to the population as a whole. Lastly, she wished to know whether a review had been conducted to eliminate stereotypes in school textbooks.

6. **Ms. Pomeranzi** requested additional information on efforts to promote the principle of equal pay for equal work under the draft strategy on gender equality for the period 2013–2020. She wished to know whether any measures had been taken to encourage women's participation in the formal labour market, including disadvantaged and ethnic minority women. What policies had been introduced to encourage men and women to share the responsibilities of family life equally?

7. **Ms. Nwankwo** asked for further information on the status of implementation of the National Strategy on Sexual and Reproductive Health (2010–2020) and the mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate its progress. What steps had been taken to make affordable modern contraceptives more readily available to women. Had the State party taken measures to reduce the use of abortion as a contraceptive method and to ensure access to information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including among minors of both sexes?

8. An assessment of the access to HIV/AIDS services in the country had found that the State party's HIV-related policies and programmes did not duly apply a gender-sensitive approach. What measures had been taken to incorporate gender equality into HIV/AIDS policies. She would appreciate an update on the findings of the review carried out in 2010 of HIV/AIDS services for the treatment of young women and girls.
9. Noting the difficulties faced by Roma women in gaining access to appropriate maternity care, she asked for information on the progress of the national safe motherhood policy, which aimed to reduce infant and perinatal mortality, and the measures in place to assist Roma women.
10. Lastly, she wished to know what steps the Government had taken to prevent drug abuse among children and provide rehabilitation assistance to children addicted to drugs.
11. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** would like to know why the Government had not taken special temporary measures to accelerate the realization of women's de facto equality with men, particularly the equality of rural and ethnic minority women, as the Committee had recommended in its concluding comments (CEDAW/C/MKD/CO/3, para. 18). She asked the delegation to provide further information on the status of land ownership for women and wondered why the many schemes to foster entrepreneurial skills among rural women had proven unsuccessful. She wished to know how the State party planned to improve access to health care and education and what steps it had taken to address domestic violence against women in rural communities.
12. Lastly, she requested information on households headed by women, in particular single mothers and widows, the social protection benefits to which they were entitled and the measures in place to eliminate discrimination against them.
13. **Mr. Hadzishce** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government had made significant progress towards compiling gender-disaggregated data on the preschool, primary and secondary education system in the country, but, unfortunately, it had been unable to derive data on girls from ethnic minority backgrounds from the figures obtained. As a means of reducing school dropout rates and eliminating gender discrimination, the Government had introduced initiatives to provide girls with free textbooks, transport and student accommodation, as required.
14. Care had been taken to introduce gender perspectives into the curriculum and to develop new gender-sensitive textbooks. In 2010, an innovative methodology for the evaluation of textbooks had been adopted to ensure that all primary and secondary school textbooks were free of gender stereotypes. As part of its National Action Plan for Gender Equality the Government intended to implement several programmes to address gender stereotypes and discrimination in education in the coming years, including the introduction of a gender equality module for preschool and primary students, specialized teacher training courses and events to promote the principle of gender equality in higher education.
15. **Ms. Kanberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that steps had been taken to increase the number of Roma children in preschool, primary and secondary education. The Government had been running a project providing scholarships, mentors and tutors to Roma children since 2006 to help them to complete their education. Each year, around 400 Roma children received support to attend preschool. In the 2011/12 academic year, 10,753 Roma children had enrolled in primary school, of which 5,528 were boys and 5,225 girls. The secondary school scholarship programme had reduced the dropout rate of Roma children significantly over the reporting period. The Government had also distributed a teacher's guide to equal educational opportunities.
16. No data currently existed on the number of Roma children in special schools, but the Government had taken steps to ensure that their special needs were met. Four regional

centres had been set up for the express purpose of determining Roma children's special educational needs and a national commission had been created to monitor the work of the centres.

17. **Mr. Ibrahim** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that a gender perspective had been introduced into labour policies under new labour legislation aimed at ending employment discrimination and helping men and women to reconcile family and workplace commitments. The law currently banned the practice of requiring women job applicants to submit to pregnancy tests, and employers who continued the practice were sanctioned. It also afforded women greater protections against unfair dismissal and prohibited the transfer of pregnant women to other work sites. Violations of the law were subject to severe penalties.

18. However, the employment rate among women was still much lower than among men, especially in rural areas, where women often performed precarious work. The share of rural women in the workforce was also low, lagging far behind urban women. The Government had thus allocated farmland and provided State agricultural subsidies to rural families in an effort to improve the situation.

19. Several projects had also been implemented to encourage women's entrepreneurship and self-employment. More efforts were needed, however, to enhance the role of the civil society in accelerating the progress of women. Regrettably, gender issues were not a priority for trade unions and employers' associations.

20. The Government had focused in particular on the creation of jobs for women and vulnerable groups. Financial incentives had been offered to employers to provide training and employment to officially registered unemployed persons. The training and employment programme targeted ethnic minority communities, especially the Roma, unemployed persons between 50 and 55 years of age, young persons with secondary education up to the age of 29 years and long-term unemployed persons. Another subsidized employment project was aimed at providing employment to persons aged 30 to 49, persons under subsidiary protection, young married couples and such vulnerable groups as victims of domestic violence, homeless persons and families, former drug users and single parents. Financial incentives were provided to employers to hire unemployed persons for a period of 6 months, on the condition that employers continued to employ the persons for at least 12 more months. Additional financial incentives were given to employers who recruited unemployed persons from the Roma community.

21. **Ms. Fakovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government had developed a safe motherhood strategy to improve infant and maternal health and reduce perinatal mortality. Under the strategy, outdated clinical guidelines and antenatal care protocols had been revised to include a recommended number of antenatal check-ups and new standards of care. Training courses on the new standards of antenatal care had been organized by the Government for all gynaecologists providing primary health care. A maternal health card listing the antenatal examinations undergone by the pregnant woman was introduced to help physicians at various levels of health care provision to evaluate her care. Hospitals had been modernized and hospital staff received training aimed at reducing infant mortality, which had been steadily decreasing in recent years, to 7.5 per cent in 2011. Efforts were being made to reach the European Union average of 5.5 per cent.

22. The Government had also implemented a sexual and reproductive health strategy for the period 2010–2020, which included the setting up of counselling centres and youth centres providing free access to information on reproductive health, condoms and oral contraceptives. It had also developed an HIV/AIDS prevention programme, financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which was targeted at high-risk groups and sought to minimize risk factors.

23. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that although the existing labour legislation guaranteed equal pay for equal work, the pay gap between men and women was owing to the fact that more women than men were in poorly paid employment. The Government was therefore seeking to stimulate the employment of women in positions of greater responsibility by introducing measures to reconcile professional and family life. The Government was also working to increase the number of women State councillors, the highest non-political positions in the State; for example, the majority of State councillors currently working in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy were women. The share of women councillors in other ministries was also high, although it was still inadequate. Nevertheless, the Government remained committed to increasing the share of women in decision-making and senior managerial positions.

24. **Ms. Kanberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that boosting employment among the Roma had been a top priority in the Government employment programmes and measures outlined in the report. The Roma had taken part in various self-employment and training schemes. Moreover, the Ohrid Framework Agreement between the Government and ethnic Albanian representatives applied the principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment with respect to employment in public administration and public enterprises. Thus, 120 Roma persons were currently employed in public bodies, a situation that was unique for a European country.

25. **Ms. Hadzishce** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government had developed an adult education programme to increase women's employment prospects and help adults to complete their formal education. Adults with primary education were enrolled for vocational training courses, at the end of which they were awarded diplomas. The Government was currently focusing on developing entrepreneurial skills among women, including educational projects in collaboration with the European Training Foundation.

26. **Ms. Fakovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Government also had programmes for the protection of the health of minority women, children, young people and socially vulnerable groups, in accordance with World Health Organization recommendations and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. In 2011, a pilot screening test programme had been conducted in four cities for the early detection of cancer in women. Free gynaecological examinations for women aged 24 to 35 years, including Pap smears, were offered in municipalities with large populations of Roma women.

27. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** requested clarification on land ownership rights for women. She recalled that she had not received any responses to her questions on the subject of violence and shelters. She drew the delegation's attention to general recommendation No. 25 on special temporary measures.

28. **Ms. Pomeranzi** welcomed the introduction of programmes to encourage entrepreneurial activities among women. She asked what measures the Government was considering to encourage de facto equality between men and women in the workplace and at home, including equal sharing of household duties.

29. **Mr. Bruun** asked whether the statistics provided on Roma employment represented the number of job applications received or the number of Roma actually recruited. Would the Government consider introducing quotas for women under the programme of subsidized employment for vulnerable groups? He asked whether cases of sexual harassment had been reported. In the light of the Government's efforts to improve the work/life balance of employees, had the Government introduced paternity leave? What was the current situation of child day-care services?

30. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that most landowners in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were men. There were fewer women than men in the workforce in rural areas. A programme had been developed to boost employment, particularly among rural and migrant women, and measures were envisaged to build women's capacities and include them in the labour market. While breaking down stereotypes posed a great challenge, awareness-raising workshops had been helping women to become informed about their rights. Efforts to strike a balance between family and professional life had been hampered by negative cultural traditions and stereotypes that had kept women at home. However, through its strategy for gender equality, the Government planned to introduce targeted measures to improve opportunities for women. The Government had also taken various steps to improve women's access to essential services, including building roads, schools and health-care facilities.

31. **Ms. Kanberi** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that not all Roma women applicants qualified for the various training programmes offered and some dropped out of the programmes. Nevertheless, many programmes, such as the public work and entrepreneurship training programmes, were open to all applicants.

Articles 15 and 16

32. **Ms. Leinarte** asked for clarification on the number of arranged marriages in the country. Did such arranged marriages in fact constitute harmful practices, hidden trafficking or forced prostitution? She would also be grateful for information on prostitution in the country, particularly on measures taken to protect female sex workers.

33. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked if the State party had adopted measures in the light of the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to criminalize early and forced marriages. Regarding community property laws, was all marital property divided equally in cases of divorce? Were all tangible and intangible assets taken into account in the division of property? How was the value of the domestic work commonly performed by women taken into account in divorce settlements? Did maintenance payments compensate for the fact that women traditionally earned less than men? What measures, if any, were in place to safeguard the economic rights, including the right to social benefits and a fair division of property, of de facto civil partners? Did the State party provide for no-fault divorce?

34. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the State party was working towards harmonizing its legislation for the protection of women's rights with European Union standards.

35. **Mr. Uzunovski** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that women had equal property rights, including, in some cases, the right to a share of assets inherited by their spouse during the marriage.

36. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that in the event of death, the surviving spouse was entitled to family pension and insurance benefits and assets acquired during the marriage.

37. **Mr. Ibrahim** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that arranged marriages occurred mainly within the Roma and ethnic Albanian communities and were not disguised cases of trafficking or forced marriages. The number of arranged marriages was in any case diminishing, particularly among the Albanian community, as a result of specific awareness-raising activities carried out in schools highlighting the importance of staying in school. Prostitution was prohibited in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Pimping was a criminal offence. The Ministry of Interior had implemented various programmes to rehabilitate girls and women involved in prostitution and reintegrate them into society.

38. **Ms. Vlahovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the principle of fault was no longer applied in divorce cases and either spouse could sue for a no-fault divorce. Furthermore, in the event of death, family law provided that the surviving spouse and offspring were the first to inherit.
39. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** asked if the State party recognized de facto unions and if the Government had a plan of action to combat early marriages.
40. **Ms. Leinarde** asked if health services covered women sex workers.
41. **Mr. Ibrahim** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that marriages of persons between 16 and 18 years of age required parental and judicial consent and the relevant medical certification. The minimum age for marriage of persons was 16 years. The law on health care provided for free health-care services to all citizens, including sex workers.
42. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that social protection legislation provided for free health care for victims of trafficking in persons.
43. **Ms. Fakovik** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that it was difficult to collect data on prostitution in the country given that prostitution was illegal. Nevertheless, contraceptives, gynaecological services, HIV/AIDS testing and counselling were provided free of charge to everyone in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and sex workers took full advantage of public reproductive health services.
44. **Ms. Grozdanova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that lawful civil partners were entitled to the same rights as married couples.
45. **Ms. Šimonović** asked whether sex workers were penalized, whether measures were in place to punish clients and whether the State party envisaged any amendments to the relevant laws.
46. **Ms. Kikerekova** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the Criminal Code provided for the punishment of pimping and pandering, including imprisonment. Prostitution, as such, was not covered by the Code. Legislation on trafficking in persons had been amended to bring it into conformity with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
47. **Mr. Ibrahim** (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that his Government was making every effort to bring its policies on gender equality into line with European Union standards. It trusted that it would overcome the main obstacle to its joining the Union, i.e. the country's name.
48. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee encouraged the State party to continue its efforts to improve the status of women, particularly given the current economic crisis affecting all European countries. She drew special attention to the issues raised concerning the rights of minority women, the elimination of stereotypes and gender-based violence, in general, and trafficking in women, in particular.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.