

Sofia, 29 November 2007

Providing the necessary number of shelters

The family violence exercised on women is a serious threat to the fundamental rights of the woman, guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, which is a serious signal for undertaking the necessary activities for building national and joint policies, having in mind the fact that family violence is very frequent in every European country, as well as in countries around the world.

Fighting family violence in the Republic of Macedonia is a strategic goal, partly implemented in the national legislation.

During the previous years, family violence as a special social phenomenon was not stipulated by special law regulation in the Republic of Macedonia. All cases of family violence were solved by applying the provisions of the Criminal Code.

Following the amendments on the Law on Family in June 2004, family violence was considered as a different issue in the Macedonian civil legislation. The state provides protection of the marriage and family from distorted relations and violence through this Law, i.e. every type of violence is strictly prohibited. As a result of the Law, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has opened four daily centers for victims of family violence, which function as special organizational units in the competent centers for social work, and there are future aspirations for expanding the network for providing this type of protection. The procedure for judicial protection has also been defined.

The following activities have been undertaken according to the national measures for primary and secondary prevention of family violence:

- certain services working with victims of family violence operate in the frames of the Centers for social work; and

- a network of Shelters for victims of family violence in the following six cities has been established: Skopje; Bitola; Kochani; Strimica; Ohrid and Kumanovo.

During 2006 the shelters have provided accommodation for 60 women and 55 children, or a total of 115 victims of family violence.

In relation to the type of activities undertaken for the well-being of the victims, the activities are most frequently of a psychological and social nature: referral to an adequate counseling center, legal assistance and representation, initializing a procedure, interventions by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, accommodation in shelters, visiting the family, counseling, referral to a health institution, financial assistance, as well as every activity that the professional team in the social services is in the position to undertake.

The statistics from 2006 shows a number of 775 victims of family violence, 703 of who are women, and 33 men. According to the nationality, 399 have a Macedonian nationality, 69 have Albanian nationality, 59 Roma people nationality, and 34 have some other nationality.

Cooperation with NGOs:

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in cooperation with Women's Organization in Skopje has opened a national SOS phone line in order to provide help for the victims of family violence, which line is a 24 hours information service, as well as a service which helps the victims of the family violence. Approximately 120 to 150 phone calls are registered on a monthly basis.

The preparation of a National Strategy for Family Violence has been initialized in June 2007, in cooperation with a non-governmental organization, which strategy shall be completed till the end of this year.

Popularization and raising public awareness:

During 2005 and 2006, the following activities have been realized in cooperation with and with the technical support of the UNICEF Office to Skopje:

- National Campaign for handling family violence, which has not only considered the public as a target group, and thus focused on women and children as the most frequent victims of family violence, but the media as well in order to stress the sensitiveness of the problem and to raise the awareness of family violence as a problem.

- In the frames of the International Campaign - 16 days of fight against violence against women, and the Pan-European Campaign of the Council of Europe for fight against family violence, a campaign under the following motto has been initialized: Put an end to the story - make violence past.