

Individuel Report

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 54th CEDAW Session 11 February – 1 March 2013

_____ can be posted on the CEDAW website _____

Prepared by:

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An NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC, United Nations

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1) Executive summary:

This report is the result of the work and research conducted by the ***Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd*** in Budapest, Hungary. The information contained herein describes the situation as experienced by the staff and clients of the organisations centres in Budapest 2011-2012. It focuses on CEDAW articles 5,11,12 and 14.

2) The Organisation:

- The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd has been working in Hungary since 1892. It currently manages two residential centres located in Budapest, one at Becsi U since 2004 and another at Zapor U since 1993 plus a day care centre for people without shelter (2011-2012). ----Between 40-50 women and 50-80 children use the organisations residential shelters each year.

3) Methodology:

- Period Covered: December 2011 to December 2012.
- Techniques implemented: Individual interviews, meetings with family members, the local community and local government.
- A discussion was also held with the local NGO forum in relation to the general situation of women in East Europe and particularly in Hungary.
- The information was collected and compiled at the staff of the centres involved.

4) Recommendations:

- **1) That the state create a viable strategy for housing and assisting homeless women, not at shelters but in the empty apartments which are state owned and improve the conditions in the women's shelters for those awaiting accommodation.**
- **2) That the state ensure that the domestic violence legislation of September 17th 2012 is fully implemented and that law enforcement personnel undergo specific training in relation to working with victims of domestic violence.**
- **3) That the state introduce gender based quotas for employers and ensure their implementation through financial penalties for noncompliance.**
- **4) That the state create an independent equality authority with the specific mission of collecting complaints from women victims of discrimination, and to investigate and take action in favour of those women.**

5) Homeless Women and Women Parenting Alone

In Hungary, discrimination against women starts within the state itself. There is no official gender segregated data available in relation to the extent of the homeless population in Budapest but our organisation estimates that approximately 15% are female. This represents 1200 – 1500 women.

6) In the past, most centres were built to house men, as the number of women in this situation was insignificant. However, this situation has changed and now there is a great need for more hostel capacity to accommodate the female homeless population. The number of free hostel beds available for homeless women in the city is in the region of 200.

7) A woman has much more difficulty finding appropriate shelter than a man as women have different needs. In the organisations interviews with homeless women the women articulated the following basic needs which they say are not currently being met:

- A hostel with locked cabinets in order to keep their personal belongings safe.
- They do not want to share their beds with bugs or cockroaches, which unfortunately, seems to be the case in the two large female free accommodation centres in Budapest.
- They do not want to be disturbed or assaulted during their sleep nor to mention be sexually abused.

8) Free shelters where the conditions are generally very poor are fully booked especially during the winter. Many women prefer to sleep outside, or find casual places (including casual partners), increasing the number of health threats. To be allocated a bed in an appropriate hostel can take 6 months or more and a woman can be on the waiting list for government housing for anything up to 7 years.

9) The group who chose to remain outside of the shelters is comprised of retirees, disability pensioners, people with mental health issues etc. who cannot afford to pay the small amount requested at some shelters because their incomes from "pensions" or "State help" is insignificant.

10) A frequent situation observed in the organisations centres is that women are seen by their partners as an economic burden. In consequence, they leave them and their children alone ignoring any responsibility for their maintenance. As a consequence, the mothers find themselves living in constant fear of been evicted because they are unable to pay their rent.

11) If the women are lucky enough to have a job that sustains them and their children, they are often harassed by their former husbands / partners asking for money.

12) Recommendation 1: That the state create a viable strategy for housing and assisting homeless women, not at shelters but in the empty apartments which are state owned and improve the conditions in the women's shelters for those awaiting accommodation.

13) Article 5: Domestic Violence

The new domestic violence legislation of September 17th, 2012 is warmly welcomed. However the lack of official records in relation to domestic violence/ abuse makes it impossible to quantify the prevalence of domestic violence in Hungarian society.

14) The lack of an appropriate response to incidences of domestic violence from law enforcement personal is an issue frequently reported by the women attending the centre, despite a legal obligation for the police to intervene in these situations. In the case of one particular woman the police refused to come to her home saying that her husband was a drug dealer.

15) Recommendation 2: That the state ensure that the domestic violence legislation of September 17th 2012 is fully implemented and that law enforcement personnel undergo specific training in relation to working with victims of domestic violence.

Article 11: Employment

16) Despite the ratification of by Hungary of the *Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women* in 1982, discrimination against women is still widespread. At the Centres run by of the *Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd*, women are helped to find work and it is in this arena that the continuing discrimination against them is most apparent.

17) Gender discrimination in recruitment and role stereotyping is frequently observed. This gender bias is explicitly mentioned in advertisements both on the internet and in the press. Women accessing the organisations centres have regularly been asked at interviews if they have children and how many children they have. Those who have stated that they have small children have not been hired. The staff of the centres have also observed first hand women being asked by a perspective employers if they belong to the Roma community during a telephone interview.

18) A lack of access to appropriate childcare prevents single mothers from taking employment that involves night work. Women have informed us of being dismissed from their employment when they have had to remain at home on a single occasion to care for a sick child.

19) The organisations centres occasionally, take care of the children while their mothers are working when no other solution can be found. In addition, contact may be made with the woman's social worker to inform them about this situation and see what assistance might be provided or at times contact has been made with the employer to advocate on the woman's behalf.

20) The Fundamental Law of Hungary (25 April 2011) Article XII, point (2) say: Hungary shall strive to create conditions ensuring that every person who is able and willing to work has the opportunity to do so. In light of this law we make the following recommendations:

21) Recommendation 3: That the state introduce gender based quotas for employers and ensure their implementation through financial penalties for noncompliance.

22) Recommendation 4: That the state create an independent equality authority with the specific mission of collecting complaints from women victims of discrimination, and to investigate and take action in favour of those women.

Article 12 and 14: Women's Health and Rural Women

23) Although, women right to health care is guaranteed by the state, the degree of access and quality differs enormously from the capital to rural areas. In both places, it is difficult to access due the amount of time consumed in waiting for an ambulance to come or, to actually, been seen by a doctor at a hospital.

24) Frequently, the centres assist families who come from small rural towns to the capital in hope of a better life and working conditions. Their housing situation in the rural areas is very poor and they claim that in numerous areas the state fails to provide access to electricity, water or sanitation.

25) Families living in rural areas also have limited transportation options. The use of public transport is difficult and often they have no money and cannot travel. Long distance cycling in winter and heavy snow is almost impossible. This seriously hampers women's access to health screening, treatment and maternity services.

Respectfully submitted,

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