

CEE Bankwatch Network's comments
on the EBRD Gender Action Plan
June 2008

CEE Bankwatch Network acknowledges positively EBRD's efforts to introduce gender equality objectives in its activities and governance practices through the Gender Action Plan. The Gender Action Plan is regarded as an important step to strengthening the bank's commitments to gender and going beyond the weak gender safeguards integrated in the new Environmental and Social Policy. Below, we offer our comments on the draft plan prepared by the EBRD gender working group. We appreciated the opportunity to comment on the document and we stay hopeful that our comments will be considered before the final plan is submitted to the board of directors for approval in July.

Looking ahead – Potential for New opportunities

- **Review of Existing Bank Activities with a Gender Component.** It is recommended that the EBRD uses the IRM review – currently under the process and scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2009 – for mainstreaming the gender empowerment into its policies, namely ensuring the equal access to the accountability mechanism by women. The bank could draw onto the public input into the IRM consultations as well as onto the findings and recommendations of the „Gender Justice: A Citizen's Guide to Gender Accountability at International Financial Institutions” study elaborated by Gender Action and CIEL in 2007.¹
- **Pilot Gender Impact Assessment.** It is recommended that the bank chooses a number of pilot projects coming into its pipeline that are likely to have implications for gender relations and carries out gender impact assessment on them. We believe that such pilot assessment will contribute to eliminating gender inequalities and reaching the projects' objectives. It will also render relevant knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the existing gender standards and procedures. Such findings may be valuable during the design of the guidance notes relating to the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment as well as during the policies review.
- **Pilot Country Programmes.** We applaud the bank on the proposal to elaborate Country Gender Assessment in a selected country. In order to establish full ownership for its country strategy, the bank should actively seek participation of national gender organisations in the preparation process.
- **Poverty alleviation.** In its pilot country and project gender assessments, the bank should pay the particular attention to the poverty alleviation.
- **In-house and external research studies.** We agree that the specific research would shed more light into the opportunities for the gender equitable transition. Over the years the bank has been promoting private ownership and privatisation as means of economic development. It would be therefore useful to examine the impact of privatisation on women and the gender equality in the region. In its

¹ http://www.genderaction.org/images/Gender%20Justice_Final%20LowRes.pdf

planned research, the bank could also concentrate on constraints the women face in the agriculture sector.

Mainstreaming of gender in Bank operations

- **Networking.** The bank's proposal to establish a regional advisory group on gender is welcome. It goes in line with the Beijing Platform for Action's recognition of the important role of NGOs and civil society, the private sector and other actors in achieving the equality objective. We advise the regional advisory group on gender convenes periodically, at a minimum on an annual basis, to maintain strategic dialogue on gender mainstreaming in EBRD activities. Similar working groups have been in practice at the ADB and the World Bank.
- **A gender sensitive indicator** should be introduced within the EBRD's broader transition indicators to measure the success of the transition process from the social, respectively gender equality perspective.
- **Capacity Building.** We commend bank's proposal to increase the awareness of staff about the gender situation in the countries of operation. With regard to possible trainings of its staff on the topics we suggest the bank involves representatives of gender organisations from the region who can bring in the required knowledge as well as the local experience. One of the possible forms of involving them would be organising a small speakers tour with gender experts and business leaders from the region.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Follow-up.** The results of the two year Gender Action Plan need to be monitored and evaluated on at least an annual basis in order to assess the achievements and to allow for possible revision of the strategy. The outcomes should be reported to public through separate reports or through the bank's annual report.