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EDITORIAL

Dear reader,

We are proud to present you the second issue of the Newsletter of the Association of Women Judges (AWJ) in BiH. The very positive feedback we received from the AWJ's members, judges, prosecutors and institutions demonstrates that the Newsletter is an important information-sharing tool: The first issue of the Newsletter - widely distributed in both electronic and printed version - has significantly increased the interest in the Association's membership and its activities.

This current edition of the newsletter provides more information on the Association's objectives and membership conditions, presented by Judge Adisa Zahiragić, President of the Association. Furthermore Judge Ružica Jukić provides a personal overview on the possibilities and advantages of being a member, while Judge Mirsada Helić illustrates how a court president can initiate a capacity-building activity for judicial associates. The final article presents highlights of the advocacy training held in Vlašić.

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES

Approximately 80 members of the AWJ are part of a vital effort to raise awareness and develop solutions to the problems surrounding gender issues in the BiH judiciary. Members participate in roundtable discussions and workshops which facilitate information sharing and improve the competency and skills to analyze every case with a gender perspective. Members of the AWJ in BiH are automatically enrolled as members of the International Association of Women Judges based in Washington D.C., and thereby benefit of complimentary materials and networking opportunities.

Membership in the AWJ not only increases one's professional credibility, but also helps improve the judicial sector in BiH in general. Membership is open to both men and women who are involved in the judiciary and have a genuine concern for gender issues in BiH.



Meeting for judicial associates in Ilidža

On 9 May 2012, the President of Ilidža court organized a meeting of representatives from the Atlantic Initiative and the Center for the Education of Judges and Prosecutors of the Federation of BiH with judicial associates in the Sarajevo Municipal Court at Ilidža Department. The main topics discussed were the status of women in the judiciary and the identification of issues in the field of gender equality about which the associates would like to learn more in upcoming training sessions.

Guests were first addressed by Judge Mirsada Helić, President of the Court, who explained that 19 judicial associates are employed within the department and are responsible for making independent judgments on over 2,000 cases. "We believe it is necessary to provide opportunities for these young and promising colleagues in terms of professional development, communication and the exchange of experiences through seminars and conferences, and to provide them with support in all cases of discrimination," said Judge Helić.

Maida Ćehajić, representative of the Atlantic Initiative, spoke about gender equality in the judiciary. The judicial associates present emphasized the importance of being able to attend seminars for judges and the selection of independent educators from specific areas of law. (Mirsada Helić)

The membership fee is only 5 KM per month, or 60 KM per year. Applications are automatically accepted for all female judges, and the applications of men, lawyers, and other applicants will be reviewed by a seven-person panel. If you are interested in joining the Association, please contact Judge Adisa Zahiragić adisa.zahiragic@pravosudje.ba to express your interest and an application will be mailed to you.

Today, the Association continues to pioneer in the field of gender issues in the Bosnian judiciary through partnerships with the Atlantic Initiative and the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). (Adisa Zahiragić)

THE POTENTIAL OF COLLECTIVE ACTION: PROMOTION OF JUDGE JUKIĆ

"The first time I heard of the Association of Women Judges was at seminar in Tuzla in 2009. At this seminar, I was extremely impressed by a lecture given by Judge Adisa Zahiragić.



Shortly after her lecture, Judge Zahiragić sent a letter to all of the courts, inviting us to become involved in the Association of Women Judges in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The idea appealed to me because the Association offers female judges the opportunity to act collectively and solve

problems we encounter in our work. I decided to join without a moment of hesitation. The Association's activities began immediately and our meetings provided an opportunity for socializing, exchanging experiences and reflecting upon our work as judges. In 2010, I was elected a member of the Association Coordination Board. Through all the projects of the Association, we are working resolutely together in order to improve the status of female judges.

After realizing the importance of strengthening the position of female judges in Bosnia and Herzegovina's judicial system, I became a candidate for the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC), as a Croat representative, in 2010. Association members supported me in their courts and promoted my candidacy among their colleagues. This was even true of individuals who did not know me personally.

The support of the Association members was a critical factor in my election and I succeeded in becoming a member of the HJPC. Shortly afterwards, I was promoted to the Vice President of the HJPC. In this way, Association members have shown what can be achieved through collective action. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Association's members for their support. I pledge to continue fighting for our position.

Capacity-building for the members of the Association in the field of advocacy

From June 22nd-24th, 27 members of the AWJ gathered at Vlašić Mountain for a capacity building workshop in the field of advocacy. The overall workshop topic was determined by AWJ members and included the following topics: argument development, message design and development, presentation, negotiation and communication, coalition building and collaborative decision-making. Furthermore, the workshop provided a platform for sharing experiences and further strengthening of the cooperation among AWJ members. The lectures and presentations were interactive and relied heavily on group work involving the identification of advocacy issues, mapping stakeholders, preparing and delivering an advocacy message and planning actions for follow-up. For several of the participants it was the first time they had participated in an AWJ activity and it was also the first time in any of the AWJ activities that almost one third of the participants were from Republika Srpska (RS).

The ultimate goal of the workshop was to enhance the capacity of the AWJ to advocate, form coalitions and present their demands and needs, notably within the judiciary, but also externally. This will be particularly important when developing the Association's priorities for the next year, when its members plan to apply their knowledge in practice via project development, lobbying and media promotion. The evaluation questionnaires, filled in by the participants at the end of the workshop, showed extremely positive feedback. All participants agreed the workshop had improved their knowledge on advocacy, been relevant to their work, helped in sharing experiences and establishing cooperation with other participants and contributed to strengthening the AWJ. This workshop is part of an ongoing project by DCAF and the Atlantic Initiative to strengthen the AWJ in the long run. A second capacity building workshop is planned for autumn.



I believe we are now in a position to achieve even greater success. This is particularly true in the context of a project that will strengthen our Association through the cooperation with the Atlantic Initiative and DCAF. The recently organized advocacy training, conducted in the framework of this project, will be used in the efforts of the Association to systematically influence changes in the judiciary. I call on all of our members to engage in the Association's work. This is the only way we will be able to attain our goals, which would not be achievable if we were to work individually. Our work will contribute to the struggle for gender equality in the courts and the creation of a system that adequately, without any bias, responds to the needs of both men and women service users." (Ružica Jukić)

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

The following activities are planned for the next few months. AWJ members will receive detailed information in advance.

- Workshop on project governance and planning - October 2012
- Working meeting on strategic planning for the Association - Sarajevo, October 2012



We look forward to meeting you in one of these events and welcoming you among our readers for the next newsletter!