Competitiveness of Women Victims of Domestic Violence on Labour Market – Problems and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of equal opportunity policies in achieving economic independence of women is one of the important factors of gender equality. The position of women on the labour market in general is an important topic in achieving the European model of social cohesion which Serbia tends to adopt. Over last decade, there were increased efforts for employing different vulnerable groups of women (regarding their age, disability, nationality, etc). One of these vulnerable groups, which are increasing and which are only partially recognized in national documents is group of women who have experienced domestic violence. Conducted research was combination of desk and field research and it had mainly descriptive character. Individual semi-structured interviews were main activity of field research (with representatives of Centers for Social Work, National Employment Service, NGOs that provide counseling and support services for women victims of violence, employers, women who have experienced violence). There was also conducted analysis of legal framework in the area of protection and support of women who have suffered domestic/intimate relationship violence. Results are showing that there are no established support measures in employment for women who experienced domestic or intimate relationship violence, but there is enormous institutional and individual need for that. There are some initiatives on local level, but they are no systematic, coherent and timely. Employers showed high level of interest and sensibility in employing this group of women and that is opportunity which relevant national institutions and mechanisms for gender equality should consider and use. Compatibility of national and EU legislation in this area is partial, unsystematic and sometimes contradictory. Conclusion is that group of women who experienced domestic/intimate relationship violence should be legally recognized as special vulnerable group on labour market and that there should be created some affirmative measures for easier entering and successful staying on labour market.

Keywords: domestic violence, violence in intimate relationships, affirmative measures, labour market, support in employment
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, the author would like to express its gratitude to the ERSTE Foundation, which, through its grants, made the project “Competitiveness of Women Victims of Domestic Violence on Labour Markets – Problems and Perspectives” and the publication of results possible.

The author would also like to express deepest gratitude to all women who gave their consent for this research to talk about their experiences. Their stories gave the author better insight in complexity of situation of violence that they are exposed to and its consequences on overall everyday functioning.

The author would also like to thank to all consultants from women's organizations, shelters and SOS phone lines, who participated in research and also in data gathering, as well as all representatives from government institutions, National Employment Service, Centers for Social Work, employers, NGOs, who participated in research and gave their valuable inputs for theme of support in employment for women who suffered domestic or intimate relationships violence.

Katarina Jirsa,
Center for Support of Women,
Kikinda, 2014.

The contents of this publication and views expressed in it, are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the ERSTE Foundation.
INTRODUCTION

Definitions and types of violence against women

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women\(^1\) (adopted by the United Nations in 1993) defines violence against women as "any act of sexual/gender-based violence that results in, or could result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion or deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether this occurs in public or private life". The Declaration emphasized that women's human rights are inseparable part of universal human rights and that violence against women is an obstacle to achieving gender equality.

The National Strategy for Improving Status of Women and Improvement of Gender Equality\(^2\), which was adopted by Republic Serbia in 2009, defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or could result in physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether it happens in the sphere of private and public life". It is further argued that to the violence are more exposed "women from disadvantaged and multiply discriminated groups (Roma women, women with disabilities, refugee women, victims of war, women living in same-sex relationships, women with mental altered behavior, women addicted to alcohol, drugs and medications, women with HIV/AIDS virus, chronic illnesses, immigrants, poor women, girls, elderly women, women in rural areas and other groups)".

Violence against women (domestic violence), as well as violence in intimate relationship in most classifications includes physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence. It is important to say that in most cases, there are present several forms of violence, it is rarely just one. Physical violence is the intentional use of physical force that may cause pain, injury, disability or death. It includes scratching, pushing, pulling hair, shaking, slapping, hitting, kicking, strangling, stabbing, burning, physical restraint, beatings, murder, but does not exclude other forms. Psychological violence is a "constant undervaluing and humiliation by the partner and the intimidation that perform any of these actions, including humiliation, controlling the victim's


\(^{2}\) National Strategy for improving status of women and improving gender equality 2010 - 2015, „Službeni glasnik RS“ (br. 55/05, 71/05-correction, 101/07 and 65/08)
behavior, withholding of information, shaming, blaming, isolation from friends and family, manipulation with victim’s children, etc. The specific form is control of victims by constant monitoring - stalking, through intimidation and harassment in public places, at home, harassing calls, messages, destroying the victim's property."

**Economic violence** is manifested as unequal access to shared resources (perpetrator’s and victim’s), withholding or controlling access to money, the prevention of employment or education and promotion, denial of the right to property, forcing the victim to give up her property, alienation of victim’s things without her consent, etc. This type of violence is usually named as context, or the factor of violence which is a result of exposure to other forms of violence and also the way in which the abuser achieves control and dominance over the victim. Numerous studies confirm that poverty, deprivation and social exclusion are often cited as factors of violence, but they cannot be considered as its causes. Violence is interpreted as the expected behavioral response of people who are exposed to different types of social and economic deprivation.³

**Sexual violence** includes a wide range of activities that constitute any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Any sexual activity without consent, which includes unwelcome sexual comments and suggestions, forced participation or viewing pornography, unwanted touching, painful and degrading sexual acts, forced sex, rape, incest.

**Prevalence of domestic violence and violence in intimate relationship**

Violence against women is the most common and widespread form of violence. In a UN study⁴ based on research on the extent and prevalence of intimate relationship violence forms in 71 countries of the world, it was registered with 13-61% of women, usually between 23 and 49%. When violence against women leads to death, perpetrators of violence are in 40-70% cases their intimate partners. Also, a study of the World Health Organization reports that prevalence for the physical and emotional violence is between 20-75%. The survey data for Europe suggest that between 20 and 25% of women at least once during their lifetime experienced physical violence by a partner⁵. Prevalence rates of psychological violence can range from 19 to 42%⁶. If we take

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³ Ignjatović, T. & Pešić, D. (2012) - „The risks of poverty for women survivors of violence - an initiative to promote social inclusion, Belgrade, Autonomous Women's Center
⁴ “Ending violence against women – From words to action” (2006). Study of the Secretary-General, United Nations
⁵ Hagemann-White, C. (2006): Combating violence against women – Stocktaking study on the measures and actions taken in Council of Europe member States, Council of Europe, Directorate General of Human Rights; Martinez, M.,
into account all forms of violence (including stalking), more than 45% of women in Europe had experienced violence in their lives.\(^7\)

There are very few researches on violence against women in the family context in Serbia, but they are still confirming basic characteristics of the phenomenon. Study made by the Victimology Society of Serbia in 2001, showed that almost every second woman in Serbia (46.1%) has experienced some form of psychological violence, and every third woman has experienced physical assault by a family member (30.6%). In most cases, physical violence against women in the family performed her husband or intimate partner (45.5%). He is also most common offender of all other forms of registered violence: 63.5% psychological violence, 72.8% of threats, 74.8% physical abuse, 75% of armed violence and 88.5% sexual violence.\(^8\)

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics\(^9\) show that cases of crime "domestic violence" are increasing and they are accounted for the largest number of applications under the group of offenses against marriage and the family. From 2002 (when domestic violence in Serbia was criminalized for the first time) to this day, the number of reported offenses increased from 192 to 2,837. In 92% of cases, the perpetrators of these acts are men, and 80-85% of victims are female.\(^10\)

To complement the picture of the prevalence and severity of manifested forms of domestic violence, we will show the data on femicide in Serbia.\(^11\) In 2010, 30 women were killed in family-partnership context, in 2011 29 women were killed, and in 2012 32 women were killed. The analysis performed for the first 6 months of 2013, shows that there is huge increase in femicide - 33 women were killed in the context of domestic violence and intimate relationship violence in this period.

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\(^9\) Data were taken from web site of National Bureau of Statistics: [http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs](http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs) (retrieved August 2013)
\(^10\) Ignjatović, T. & Pešić, D. (2012) - „The risks of poverty for women survivors of violence - an initiative to promote social inclusion, Belgrade, Autonomous Women's Center
\(^11\) Femicide is gender-based murder, committed against women, girls, and babies females by males. For perpetrator of femicide victim’s gender is relevant (fact that the victim was a woman). Femicide is a crime against women, motivated by hatred of women, contempt and a sense of superiority, in which the offender thinks he has the right to take life a woman (source [http://zeneprotivnasilja.net](http://zeneprotivnasilja.net), retrieved May 2013)
\(^12\) Collection and analysis of newspaper articles published in Serbia, is performing annually Network of Women Against Violence, coordinated by the Autonomous Women's Center of Belgrade ([http://zeneprotivnasilja.net](http://zeneprotivnasilja.net))
Review of legislation

Domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence are criminalized by the laws of the Republic of Serbia as offenses and almost all are prosecuted ex officio. The laws provide special protection to children and minors, as well as a degree of protection for victims in criminal proceedings. In 2002 domestic violence is criminalized as a separate offense and in 2005 there was created protective measures against domestic violence. There had been adopted a series of policy documents and protocols in order to improve activity of government institutions to combat domestic violence and provide appropriate support and assistance to victims of violence.

The national legislation framework in the field of domestic violence is represented by:

Employment, social status of women and violence itself – is there connection?

Promotion of gender equality is one of the crucial development issues, because it involves the question of appropriate use of female human resources and contributes directly to improving the quality of life of all citizens. Balanced economic development is not possible without the proper use of female human resources, so it is essential that for women are created special measures to encourage them for larger participation in the market economy. Although the equality of women and men is legally guaranteed by the Constitution of Serbia, real indicators show that

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13 Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
14 National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality for 2010-2015
women in Serbia are at a disadvantage compared to men, and that is necessary to create measures to equalize and balance their position. According to the Survey on the Status of Women in the Labour Market\textsuperscript{15}, the unemployment rate for women is twice higher than the rate for men. Among the employees is 44% of women and among unemployed there are 54.3% of women. The gender pay gap (difference between the salaries of men and women for same job) is 16%. Persons who are with free will leaving job for family reasons, are in 80% of cases women, and they are also in 98% cases those for whom the only work is the one in household. Although official statistics do not show a difference in the percentage of risk of poverty for women and men, specific studies and analysis show that in countries in transition there is deteriorating of economic position of women as a result of interaction of various factors: general re-traditionalization and patriarchalization of society; decline in gross domestic product (GDP); budget restrictions which particularly affects women because there are reduces on spending in health and education sector, reducing of employment rate and unemployment rate; increase in the share of women among the poor population, increase in the "gray" economy, which intensifies the exploitation and discrimination of women, and conflict of roles (family and work) where burden is still predominantly worn by women. There is a specific problem of employing of women over 45 years of age, young women and women who are from multiple discriminated groups. Underutilization of women's labour force is one of the obstacles to faster economic growth, and there is much room for women to become an important resource for development, contributing to the overall improvement of society\textsuperscript{16}.

The economic independence of women is a precondition for a greater impact on decision-making, better access to health care, better education and safer protection from possible violence. If there is no economic independence, all other measures are much less likely to succeed\textsuperscript{17}.

1990s of the last century in Serbia, brought re-traditionalization trend that leads to the worsening of overall social position of women. Various analyzes which were performed in last few years, showed that marginalized social status and limited access to important resources (financial, knowledge and skills, social capital) increases the risk of falling into poverty of many groups of women. Those who are particularly vulnerable are single mothers, elderly women, disabled

\textsuperscript{15} National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality for 2010-2015
\textsuperscript{16} National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality for 2010-2015
\textsuperscript{17} Babovic, Marija: “The position of women in labour market in Serbia", United Nations Development Programme, Belgrade, 2007
women, and women living in rural areas, refugees, women who are helping family members, Roma women, uneducated women, unemployed women and women victims of violence. The position of women in the private sphere is characterized by a patriarchal division of roles and high level of domestic violence. Maintenance of patriarchy within the family leads to unequal division of labour in which women perform most of the unpaid household work, and in many cases have limited access to financial resources.

Knowledge of the consequences of intimate relationship/domestic violence against women confirms that the longevity and severity of violence can have major consequences on health, psychological, social and economic functioning of women and other family members who are directly or indirectly exposed\textsuperscript{18}. Women victims of violence are far more likely beneficiary of social and material assistance and also under significantly greater risk of poverty and social exclusion. Violence, in interaction with other factors, causes the marginalization and exclusion of women in different areas: labour market participation, income, education, family and social network, the possession of own place of living, leisure activities.\textsuperscript{19}

The most important institutions that have been established in recent years to improve the position of women, or the inclusion of gender equality perspective are given in the Diagram 1 in Annexes. Establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality involves the creation of separate bodies of state administration at different levels (from the local to the national level of government) whose mission is to create, promote, implement and monitor gender equality in all spheres of public life.

\textsuperscript{18} Ignjatović, T. & Pešić, D. (2012) - „The risks of poverty for women survivors of violence - an initiative to promote social inclusion, Belgrade, Autonomous Women's Center

\textsuperscript{19} Lybecker Jensen, V., and S. L. Nielsen (2005): When violence happens every day – a study of male violence against women in intimate relationships, The Danish Centre for Research on Social Vulnerability and LOKK, Denmark
METHODOLOGY

Main goal of this research was to determine the current situation in Serbia regarding employment of women victims of domestic violence, in terms of available support for their employment, employability itself of these women, their „attraction“ to the labour market. Research also wanted to see if there are some affirmative measures on local or national level, and last, but not the least, are these women even recognized as a vulnerable and less employable group by the competent authorities.

Conducted research was combination of desk and field research and it had mainly descriptive character. In terms of time dimension, it can be said that it was cross-sectional. The main instrument for collecting data was individual semi-structured interview, which was adapted for specific subgroup in sample (representatives of institutions in area of employment, social protection, gender equality; NGOs that provide counseling and support for women victims of violence; employers; women who have experienced violence). Interviews for different respondents had certain number of the same questions (or set of questions). The intention was to enable later comparison of given responses and draw possible conclusions. All interviews were transcript and material was coded in accordance with themes in interview. Coded material was analyzed with interpretative method.

Research was conducted from January 2013 till June 2013, in Serbia. Main researcher was Katarina Jirsa, professional associate in NGO Center for Support of Women. Several consultants from women’s NGOs (who are directly working with women who suffered domestic or intimate relationships violence) were engaged to conduct interviewing with women victims of violence and collect data in all chosen cities.

Data gathering and interviewing of women who suffered domestic/intimate relationship violence have conducted consultants from women NGOs in Serbia, which are located and have their work done in cities where research had been implemented. Before conducting interview, women were informed and asked to sign consent for participation in research. This consent was ensuring that data given in interview are confidential and that they are not going to be misused in any way.

Data gathering about existing measures, services, employment and economic empowerment policies conducted researcher. She has also conducted data entry for whole research, as well as overall qualitative and quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis was conducted in SPSS program (version 15) and it included descriptive analysis. The goal of qualitative analysis was to
draw some common conclusions and make possible policy recommendations. The research expectation was that qualitative data will be complement and that they will illustrate previously obtained data and conclusions from the analysis of existing legal framework in Serbia (first step in the methodology).

Research design and chosen methodology acquired conducting of 3 types of qualitative analysis:

1. **Analysis of the existing legal framework in Serbia** in terms of rights and visibility of women victims of violence. The goal was to determine the presence of provisions that directly or indirectly identify particularly vulnerable groups of women (such as women victims of violence) as right holders; also in terms of the existence of affirmative actions in area of employment for women who suffered domestic violence. To the analysis were added conclusions and recommendations from several interviews with representatives of Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality; Provincial Ombudsperson and Gender Equality Directorate, who are working on creation and development of strategic documents in area of economic empowerment, equality and social protection of women who experienced domestic violence. This analysis was performed the analysis of primary and secondary data sources relating to legislation and policy documents relevant to the field of domestic violence and employment of vulnerable groups of women, and specifically women who have experienced domestic violence or intimate relationship violence.

2. **Analysis of experiences of women who suffered domestic or intimate relationship violence** – interviews with women who suffered domestic violence and who reported it to CSW, SOS hotlines, Shelters, Counseling centers in 5 five chosen cities. Interviews were focused on their experience on violence, how it affected her job, work or seeking employment, experiences with employers and available services in terms of employment and support for employment. The goal was to gain insight into the problems and experiences of women victims of domestic violence that they have in the context of employment, labour, available support for employment and economic empowerment. The questionnaire consisted of open and closed questions, and they included following groups of information - basic socio-demographic data, specific features of the situation of violence, experience in the field of employment and job, eventual impact of situation of violence and employment, available
support services in the community, attitudes and opinions towards the creation of special measures for women who have experienced violence in the area of employment.

3. **Analysis of existing measures and services** for vulnerable and multiple discriminated groups of women, especially women who suffered domestic/intimate relationship violence (in area of social protection, employment, economic empowerment). Interviews for different group of respondents had certain number of the same questions (or set of questions): harmonization of legal framework with the actual situation in regard to employment and economic independence of women survivors of violence, creating special affirmative action measures in employment for group of women survivors of violence, gender sensitivity of relevant documents and legislation in this field, the importance of employment for recovering from violence and reintegration in society, existing support measures and good practices in the local community, intersectional partnerships, plans for further, methods for continuous empowerment and system support for group of women survivors of violence in the area of employment.

**Sample** consisted of representatives of relevant national and provincial institutions (Center for Social Work, National Employment Service, Gender Equality Directorate, Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality, Provincial Ombudsman), employers (multinationals, local companies and small local businesses), representatives of NGOs that work directly with women victims of violence (SOS hotlines, Counseling services, Shelters), women who have experienced violence (who are employed/unemployed, seeking/not seeking employment, who came out from violence/are exiting violence) in 5 chosen cities in Serbia (Kikinda, Novi Sad, Beograd, Kragujevac, Niš), which are chosen because of the geographic diversity requirement. Interviews with consultants and representatives from NGOs were included in research later, because as individuals who work with women who suffered violence they know their specific needs in the context of employment, as well as the representatives of organizations they can share plans for future projects or programs for economic empowerment and support these women (in the context of employment). There were also conducted interviews with 2 representatives of „examples of good practice“ – project „The Good Bag“ (Smart kolektiv, Serbia) and campaign „Black on White - Decent Work for Everyone“ (coalition of several NGOs from domain of protection of work rights).
Table 1 shows detailed sample structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Subsample</th>
<th>Name of institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kikinda</td>
<td>National and provincial institutions</td>
<td>• Center for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>• Center for Support of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>• Artesa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women who suffered violence</td>
<td>5 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novi Sad</td>
<td>National and provincial institutions</td>
<td>• Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provincial Ombudsman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Center for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shelter for Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>• SOS Women’s Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>• Neoplanta AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women who suffered violence</td>
<td>4 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgrade</td>
<td>National and provincial institutions</td>
<td>• Gender Equality Directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Center for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>• Autonomous Women’s Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>• ERSTE bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples of good practice</td>
<td>• Good bag (project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Black on white (project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women who suffered violence</td>
<td>5 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kragujevac</td>
<td>National and provincial institutions</td>
<td>• Center for Social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Shelter for women victims of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs/Employers</td>
<td>• Association of business women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women who suffered violence</td>
<td>3 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niš</td>
<td>National and provincial institutions</td>
<td>• Center for Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs/Employers</td>
<td>• Girls’ Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Association of business women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women who suffered violence</td>
<td>4 persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research difficulties

- **Smaller number of respondents than expected.** This primarily applies to employers and NGOs from 2 towns, Nis and Kragujevac. Although they were contacted by telephone, e-mail and get introduced with purpose of the research and the expected outcomes, we had no success in bringing them to interviews. Also, it was originally planned to have bigger number of interviews with women survivors of violence, but because this is a vulnerable and specific group, experiences of violence that they had are (still in majority of cases) very intense, painful, not enough processed and a large number of women does not want any further "reminder" to this experience. Also, some of them are still living with the perpetrator and they don’t have a freedom of giving consent and participating in interview.

- **Difficulties in processing and analysis of results.** They are primarily caused by incomplete data: due to the relatively small-size sample it is not possible to make generalizations that would apply to the entire population, but still, data indicate important trends in the field of economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, specifically support in employment of women survivors of violence. Secondly, the lack of a unique national database of women victims of domestic/intimate relationship violence in Serbia, we don’t have insight in their specific socio-economic characteristics and hence, cannot give some predictions, deeper or overall conclusions.
RESULTS

Existing legal framework in Serbia in terms of rights and visibility of women victims of violence

Conducted analysis aims to show how and in what way legal documents and strategies recognize group of women victims of violence as right holders. We analyzed laws, national and provincial policy documents, action plans for these documents, and policy documents related to employment, social protection and promotion of women and combat gender-based violence at the community level, in chosen municipalities and cities that participated in research.

Labour Law recognizes women as subjects of rights. In addition, the Law registers also a comprehensive category - single parents - as subjects of rights, but there is not a category in relation to gender, for example "single mothers."

Law on Employment and Insurance in case of Unemployment recognizes women as subjects of rights. As subjects of rights is also identified the category of „less employable unemployed“. For this category, the law provides special measures, such as affirmative action, benefits or special rights in the implementation of these programs and active labour market measures, the priority in the development of individual employment plan and employment in public works.

Law on the Prevention of Harassment on the Workplace does not recognize women and vulnerable groups of women, as subjects of rights, and therefore does not recognizes women survivors of violence.

Anti-Discrimination Law in Article 16 prohibits discrimination on labour or violation of equal opportunities for employment or to enjoy equal conditions of labour rights. It is not be considered as discriminatory - distinction, exclusion or preference because of particular job characteristics in which personal characteristics of person represents real and decisive condition of hiring, if the purpose of that is justified, as well as protective measures for certain categories of persons referred to in paragraph 2 of this article (women, pregnant women, parents, minors, persons with disabilities, etc.)

Gender Equality Law in Article 11 prescribes that the employer has obligation toward employees, regardless of gender, to ensure equal opportunity and treatment, in relation to achieving their labour rights and employment benefits, in accordance with the law governing the

20 Službeni glasnik RS, br. 18/05
work. The Law provides promotion of employment and self-employment of under-represented sex.

Social Welfare Law\textsuperscript{21} does not recognize women victims of violence, but there are mentioned potential adult users of services and they who have right to social security - "if there is a danger of becoming victims or self-neglecting victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence".

National Employment Strategy for period 2011-2020\textsuperscript{22} recognizes women or certain vulnerable groups of women, as subjects of rights. In addition, the Strategy lists related categories also, such as single parents, victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking. Also it registers categories - vulnerable, the most vulnerable groups in the labour market and less employable persons. Under heading "2.4.3. - Equal opportunities for all on the labour market", it is claimed that there are multiple vulnerable groups who are in a particularly difficult situation on the labour market and therefore, it is required to have affirmative actions to encourage their employment. Strategy announces that in future there will be work on creating conditions for systemic policy of equal opportunities in economy, promoting women's entrepreneurship, self-employment and employment of women, reduction of economic inequalities that are result of multiple discrimination, enhancing capacity of all actors in economy and society for the elimination of gender discrimination and better use of women's resources.

National Action Plan for Employment for 2013 as one of the goals and priorities of employment policy, states "creation and implementation of specific measures and activities aimed towards disadvantaged people and particularly vulnerable groups on the labour market, as well as long-term unemployed, people without qualifications, people with disabilities, Roma people, women living in rural areas, users of financial social assistance, refugees, returnees under the readmission agreement, orphans, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, single parents and parents of children with disabilities, etc."

National Strategy for Improving the Status of Women and Gender Equality recognizes women and vulnerable groups of women in a number of specific objectives. Women survivors of violence are not specifically mentioned.

\textsuperscript{21} Službeni glasnik RS, no. 24/2011
\textsuperscript{22} Službeni glasnik RS, br. 37/11
National Strategy for the Prevention and Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women and Violence in Intimate Relationships identifies women who are victims of domestic violence within the fourth strategic area "System measures and support to victims" within the specific goal "To promote measures to support women victims of domestic violence" by defining activities: „2.1.3. To develop, adopt and implement affirmative action measures to encourage employment and self-employment of women who have suffered violence” And „2.1.4. - To consider establishing financial and economic empowerment of women - victims of domestic violence in the local governments. “

Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of gender-Based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for period 2008-2012, recognizes women who have experienced violence in the short-term goal 6 - "To organize and support the socio-economic programs and measures that contribute to economic independence of victims of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence in Vojvodina". Within measures for preventing violence (Socio-economic measures), defining measures "Define, adopt and encourage the implementation of affirmative action for employment, self-employment and career guidance of women, particularly victims of gender-based violence." It was planned that by the end of 2008 there will be established a plan, and from 2009 on forth to continuously implement programs and annual reports. However, in an interview with a representative of the Provincial Secretariat for the Economy, Employment and Gender Equality (this institution coordinated and was responsible for creating of Strategy), it is stated that this is one of the few goals during the implementation of the Strategy that had not been achieved. In Secretariat there was idea to develop an initiative to develop special programs for the economic empowerment of women survivors of violence, but later, they came to the agreement that it is necessary to design this program in such way, that it will do no harm to this group of women and to avoid stigmatization of women. During 2013 there was formed working group for creation of new Strategy and within it, special working group for creating policy paper for the economic empowerment of women who have experienced violence. This activity is planned within project "Integrated Response to Violence against Women in Serbia", whose implementation supports UN Women. It should be noted that the Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality in the 2008 had created "Program for Encouraging Employment and Self-Employment of Vulnerable Groups

23 Službeni list Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine, br.9-3/08
of Women in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina 2009-2011" which as a general purpose had "To improving status of women on the labour market and to increase level of gender equality in Province until 2011". Program was implemented through the Secretariat's calls intended for self-employment and new employment, within there was special advantage given to women from vulnerable groups. However, women victims of violence were not recognized as a special group. Social Welfare Development Strategy⁴ does not recognize women and vulnerable groups of women, as subjects of rights. The strategy generally identifies vulnerable groups - victims of abuse and victims of violence.

Local strategic documents²⁵
At the level of studied local communities, there is no harmonization of legal and policy frameworks to support women who suffered of violence. Where this group of women has been recognized, it is mainly through services of temporary accommodation and relocation in situations of acute violence (shelters and safe houses), as well as the one-time financial assistance. In the Decision on the Rights of Social Protection in city of Belgrade²⁶ there is defined measure of providing continuous financial support to women victims of violence, in maximum extent to one year. Also, group of victims of violence (not specifically women victims of violence) has been recognized as a priority group which has the right to social housing in protected conditions in Belgrade. In Protocol of Cooperation of Town's Government and Belgrade's Preschool Institution, it is defined inclusion of a child in preschool, even if mother is not employed, if the mother and child are victims of domestic violence. In the Decision on Social Protection of city of Novi Sad²⁷, it is mentioned as a particular form of social welfare "education for integration into the labour market and environment" and as one of a group who are entitled to this form of protection, are "women and children exposed to domestic violence". However, data from interviews with representatives of institutions in Novi Sad show that this right hasn't been applied in practice. From the analysis of Local Action Plans of Employment (that have been adopted in some municipalities), as well as from analysis of Action Plans for Advancement of Women in the local community, we can draw the conclusion that women who have experienced

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³⁴ Službeni glasnik RS, br. 108/05
³⁵ Within this group, there were analyzed following documents: Social Welfare Development Strategy (on local levels), Decision on Social Protection (local levels), Local Employment Action Plan, local action plans to improve the status of women
³⁶ Službeni list grada Beograda, br.10/11
³⁷ Službeni list grada Novog Sada, br. 38/11
violence are not identified as a target or priority group, and they are only mentioned in one activity of one local Action Plan, through establishment of a Fund for Financial Assistance for Women who have suffered violence (Fund has not yet been established). Also, in one of the cities, victims of domestic violence (but not specifically women victims of violence) are recognized as less employable group.

**Experiences of women who suffered domestic or intimate relationship violence**

**General characteristics**

Conducted analysis shows that most women who have experienced violence belong to different groups of working-age population (25-55 years), usually have two children, they are qualified or highly qualified workers (skilled workers), without permanent and secure job, and without stable and regular incomes. Large number of them were at least once employed, and for various reasons lost their jobs, but there are those who have never been employed before. Monthly income of employed women is average 300 EUR (for 33.3% of them), and it is spent usually for bills, food and for children's education, because in 100% of cases these women are paying for children's needs. 44% of them pay for the cost of some court process: divorce, criminal charges of domestic violence, protective measures against domestic violence, custody of children. 85.7% of them estimated that they need to improve situation regarding their employment status - find a job, find second job, or to have some type of additional training. Women who are unemployed and who are living in violence, fulfill their daily existential needs by receiving material or financial support from parents, husband's parents, or husband who is at the same time abuser and who is committing economic violence against woman, by giving her certain amount of money, which must be enough for all that he thinks that amount of money should buy. Also, only a small number of them (8.3%) are receiving some type of financial assistance from the relevant institutions (as single mothers, unemployed persons, alimony, child support, etc.). A large percentage of them are still in abusive and violent relationship (66.7%), as they perceive that their insecure employment status, housing and finance do not allow them to get out of violence. Violence against them is usually happening occasionally (a few times a month - 41.7%) and the most common are multiple forms – joint psychological, physical, sexual and economic violence (83.3%). 75% of them addressed some of the relevant institutions regarding situation of violence, most often to the police (58.3%), women's organizations, counseling services and Centers for
Social Work (41.7%). In large number of cases, children were also exposed to situation of violence - in 33.3% they were witnesses of violence and in 41.7% of cases they were directly exposed to violence.

**Employment**

83.3% of respondents have been employed at some point, usually in lower skilled and lower paid jobs (clerk, seller, factory workers, bakers, babysitters). 75% of them have been legally employed, and most of them report that the reason for termination of work was decision of the employer (28.6%) or worsening of their health status, usually due to many years of suffering violence (28.6%). 83.3% of respondents report that they were employed during violence and 58.3% of them believe that their job and working itself helped them to handle better situation of violence that they were in. They explained it in a sense that they spent a lot of time outside the house and without presence of abuser, so they could concentrate on work and get their mind off what happens at home. They had financial security, they were able to pay all obligations and have savings. Some of them got a promotion on work in that period, so they spent even more time on work, which suited them. 58.3% of respondents are currently employed and 43.8% of them are not satisfied with working conditions – it is requested from them to work overtime but they are not paid for that, they have no days off, work conditions are unsatisfactory, job position is uncertain, and they have irregular salaries, etc. 50% of the total number of respondents is now looking for a job and it takes an average of 2 years to find it. Areas where most of them are searching for job are trade (62.5%) and child care services (37.5%). In most cases (50%) job seeking is carried out through friends and acquaintances, by search on Internet, in print newspapers, directly at employers’ offices (33.3%) and very few of them (8.3%) is looking for a job through services and job ads in the National Employment Service. All of them said that they would accept lower skilled position, part-time work or even work in the "gray" economy and as unregistered workers (91.4%). Women who have been or still are registered as unemployed persons on National Employment Service's evidence (40%) were asked about their experiences with this institution. On average, they spend 3 years on evidence as registered unemployed persons and 41.7% were beneficiaries of some active or passive employment programs. These usually included: financial compensation in case of job loss in duration of one year, public works, additional training on job search and starting own business, or training for another occupation. Respondents think that these measures were not helpful in finding a job or increasing
their own competitiveness on the labour market (57.1%), while 28.6% believe that these programs have helped them in terms of mastering basic skills needed for the job and establishment of network of institutional contacts that can be helpful in future. In 83.3% of cases employees in National Employment Service did not have information that client is a victim of violence and when they had that information, they treated her exactly the same as other clients (in the sense that they didn't provide her additional support in job search, information on available training courses, regularly informed her of job opportunities or exempted from paying of administrative fees, etc.

The most common problems and obstacles that women faced during job search were: physical and psychological consequences from the suffered violence - 41.7% (injuries, bruises, lack of confidence, distraction, lack of support, anxiety, depression); high level of corruption in the country and employment by nepotism (25%); low employment rate on national level and small numbers of job offers (25%); coordination and organization of daily life, mostly for child care (16.7%); their age (16.7%); level of education (16.7%); not having work experience (16.7%); abuser was (or still is) forbidding her to work (16.7%). For illustration, one respondent's statement is given entirely: "A small child is problem for employers. Consultants in National Employment Service told me that until child's third year no one will hire me. And the problem for employers is me being single mother. My work experience is not of importance for them."

42.9% of respondents reported that the situation of violence reflected on their work, in the sense that it was hard for them to concentrate on work assignments and work environment, they had to go to work with injuries and bruises and try to hide them, they are nowadays anxious, nervous, easily distracted, they have no patience with colleagues, and in some cases, husband (abuser) was trying discredit their work. 71.4% of them reported that colleagues and superiors at work knew about their situation, but the most common reason was "external" - women didn't want to talk about it, but there were situations when they had to come on work with bruises, or abuser would come into the workplace and discredit them, follow her to work and controlled and restricted her movement, and so on. They say that colleagues and superiors generally respond well to that knowledge, in the sense that they act protectively, with understanding, giving them free days or vacation, provided assistance in finding accommodation, etc. 60% of respondents estimated that situation of violence had impact on fact that they now don't have a job - usually
their abuser (spouse or partner) prohibited them to work, blackmailed them or conditioned them with children in order to quit their jobs and stop working.

83.3% of women said that the local community/municipality did not implement any program or project for economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence. Only 25% of them knew that there are some measures and services for women who have experienced violence in local community. They cited following: consulting services in local women's organizations, temporary accommodation in shelters, family counseling services (which operates under the Centre for Social Work), where they are established.

50% of women consider that the group of women with experience of violence is not legally visible in Serbia. As the most common reason (27.3%) they cited that institutions are not interested in their situation (when they are referring) and that no one asks them what are they surviving – there is no established minimum of general, institutional understanding of gender-based violence phenomenon; then poor condition throughout the state and non-implementation of existing laws (in which domestic violence is a crime) and sometimes, women are embarrassed to talk about suffered violence. One respondent said: "...I don't know... I came across an employer who understood me, but no one in Serbia needs battered women, they want cheerful and smiling ones. A woman, who comes out of violence, has always something behind her and also she has children. And employer is just interested in profit." When asked which rights women who have experienced violence should have in area of employment, 58.7% of respondents stated "priority in employment". Also, as one of good measures to solve their unemployment status, they recognized the establishment of local social services and employment of women survivors of violence in those services (taking care of children, elderly, etc). As the most common form of systemic support in order to increase their competitiveness on the labour market, they cited "temporarily employment after exiting violence - at least for 6 months" and that it would be just enough if all relevant institutions would "do their job" and show empathy, understanding and provide support as defined by laws. 85% of respondents believe that employment is one of the most important (or the most important) factor for recovery of experienced violence and reintegration in community.
Services for women who have experienced domestic or intimate relationships violence

Conducted analysis was primarily focused on measures and services in areas of social protection, employment and economic empowerment.

Center for Social Work

Although the Law on Social Protection recognizes victims of domestic violence, a record of this institution does not recognize them. 75% of respondents from Centers for Social Work report that some measures at their institutions are aimed at victims of domestic violence, while only 25% of respondents reported that such measures are directed towards women who are victims of domestic violence. These are primarily measures and services defined by the Law on Social Protection and most common are: temporary accommodation, shelter services, psychosocial support and counseling, one-time/temporary/permanent financial assistance, protection measures against domestic violence. As this institution does not have jurisdiction to resolve problems in the field of labour and employment, when women asked for help in finding a job (25% of respondents reported this situation), in most cases they worked on psychological empowerment of woman, so that she by herself could take the initiative to seek for a job. As for referring to institutions involved in mediation of employment, respondents report that in 100% of cases they referred women to local branch of National Employment Service.

National Employment Service

This institution and its documents recognize women as a vulnerable group on the labour market and as less employable group, in relation to certain age (women over 50 years of age). Victims of domestic violence and women victims of domestic violence are not recognized as a special group(s) of service users, and there is no program or measure that is aimed just at them. If woman - service user, gives information that she is/was victim of domestic violence, this fact is never evidenced and it is not treated specifically, outside prescribed internal procedures and rules. It is important to note that this institution has and is keeping gender-sensitive statistics, in all areas of users' evidence, which could be a good basis and start for future initiatives. 50% of respondents stated that National Employment Service participates in local and national projects related to increasing employability of women. They are estimating that they are open for cooperation with local institutions and NGOs for support in employment of women survivors of
violence, but they can not specify that something like that will be done in near future. The overall researcher's impression is that National Employment Service is not sensitized, or oriented toward group of victims of domestic violence or toward a group of women survivors of violence. They find that it is not primarily their domain of work, but instead that there should be engaged other public institutions in system of social protection and the wider local community.

**Women’s NGOs who are working with women who suffered domestic violence**

This group of service providers is exclusively focused on women who have experienced domestic violence/violence in intimate relationship. Some of them provide specialized services to multiple marginalized groups of women, such as women with disabilities, Roma women etc. Provided services are usually information about available support and measures, legal advices and legal aid, psychological support and contact with institutions instead of women, referral to other institutions, accommodation in shelters/safe houses, SOS consultations, e-mail consultations, group work (self-help groups and assertiveness training). 88% of them reported that women asked them about help in finding job. The most common reactions of NGOs were reference to potential employers or professional training programs, if it was estimated that such moves will be successful and favorable for women. Referring to specific jobs or employers was always conducted only through private contacts and acquaintances, and not through institutional channels. Also, when they had resources, NGOs helped women with preparing CVs, reading job ads and applying for certain job positions. In 75% of cases, NGOs referred women on National Employment Service, as well as on potential employers. In 62.5% of cases they organized trainings about self-employment for women, CV preparation, and job search. 37.5% respondents said that their NGOs conduct other programs/initiatives to help women to find a job - these are usually assertiveness trainings and organization of public works, which are then implemented within the NGO. When it comes to opinion of National Employment Service, respondents said that they have no feedback from them and that women would tell them later that they haven’t received adequate services in order to increase their employability.

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28 Assertiveness trainings are conducted in the context of increasing woman's self-esteem and improving her communication skills
Employers

50% of surveyed employers said that they have developed policy for hiring candidates from vulnerable groups. These groups often include people with disabilities, people who belong ethnical minorities and single mothers. 67% of them reported that they have developed some programs for support of specific vulnerable groups in local communities (municipalities) in which they operate: humanitarian programs, donations for different health, educational and social institutions, sporting and cultural events, etc. 33% of them have developed special employment policies for women and they say that it involves employment of women from vulnerable groups from the local community. 16% of them said that they have special employment policies for women survivors of violence - it means that they are interested in enabling them work engagement, if victim of violence would come and addressed them with such request. 16% of them said that the fact that the candidate is victim of domestic violence, would change the selection process for her, in way that she would have priority in employment, if all other requirements for job position are met. None of interviewed employers and representatives of women's business associations, have no future plans for developing specific employment programs for women survivors of violence.

Possible support measures in employment and systematic solutions for economic empowerment

85% of respondents (representatives of institutions, employers, NGO sector, institutional mechanisms for gender equality) agreed that there should be created special affirmative measures for women who have experienced violence in the area of employment. Representatives of National Employment Service agreed less with this conclusion, because they believe that group itself has to fight for creation of special employment programs and they doubt whether is it good to favorite one group of users, when “we know that every group of users needs help and support in employment”.

As a form of affirmative action, respondents most often cited:
- Vocational training (re-training, additional training; different types of courses - for computers, foreign languages, crafts, etc)
- Priority in employment
- Benefits and incentives for employers for hiring group of women who suffered violence
- Empowering for job seeking and entering in the labour market - combination of mentor training programs, support and empowerment to search and find job
- Recommendations from Center for Social Work and local government for employment of these women (as it already exists for enrollment in one city’s kindergartens)
- Additional support services for women, so she would agree to attend trainings (child care services, elderly care)

As a form of **system support** that would be aimed at increasing competitiveness of women survivors of violence, respondents cited:
- Systemic networking of all relevant institutions, with special emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of good cooperation at the local level
- To legally identify group of women survivors of violence, as a particularly vulnerable group in different areas of life, including employment
- Part of the funds that are set aside for self-employment to be aimed at separate self-employment program for women survivors of violence
- Comprehensive support of women of all relevant institutions in the municipality, which includes all aspects of life, from housing to child care
- In circle of institutions that are involved in support and providing services for women who suffered domestic violence, it must be included National Employment Service, as it has been seen as one of the most relevant institution for solving the problem of unemployed vulnerable groups. Also, institutional mechanisms for gender equality at local level should deal with this issue. There should be established institutional cooperation between Local Commission for Employment and Local Commission for Gender Equality.

**Examples of good practices**

**Good Bag**\(^\text{29}\) (Smart Collective Belgrade, with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and Erste Bank) - A Good Bag sew 15 women from 5 women's associations in Serbia and the goal is to continue the project as it can develop and operate as a successful social enterprise. These are women from poor, socially disadvantaged backgrounds, women from less employable groups and some of them are victims of violence. They are mainly women without a permanent job and regular incomes, who live in areas which don't have many prospects for economic security and life worthy of man. In producing of Good Bag can join (through

\(^\text{29}\) [http://dobratorba.rs](http://dobratorba.rs)
these associations) every woman who knows how to sew and has a very simple sewing machine. By working at home she can determine by herself when and how much time will she devote to sewing. In cooperation with associations from where they are coming, women have gone through the workshop in order to gain necessary skills to produce Good Bags according to scheme. It is made from 95% natural materials and is ideal as a branded promotional bag, the company's cost-effective and innovative promotional gift. The purpose of the project is economic empowerment of women as one of the key prerequisites for the development of the whole society and the establishment of higher standards of human rights. The organizers want to encourage companies and organizations to include social enterprises in its supply chain and operate in a socially responsible manner.

The "Black on White" - Action to improve conditions for decent work - six partner NGOs in January 2012 began implementation of project "Decent Work for All". The main part of project was campaign "Black on White - We are Louder Together", in which citizens were informed about labour rights and motivated to defend their rights in this area. Requirements for regular salaries, reducing of the tolerance to work illegally, work in comply with rules on health and safety at work, reducing discrimination in employment - these were backbone of the civil initiative that was implemented throughout Serbia. Also, throughout duration of the project, interested citizens were provided free legal assistance in the protection and achieving of their labour rights.

Free education courses for single mothers and women who are victims of violence - professional development program for unemployed single mothers and women who are victims of violence is implemented by International Aid Network (IAN) Belgrade, with the support of International Women's Club. Education is part of project "Education to work" and includes number of courses designed to improve employment opportunities. Women have access to basic computer courses and web design, English language course, actively seeking work course and practical training for the administrative assistant. Women who pass the computer course will gain ECDL certificate - European Computer Driving License which is an internationally recognized certification. Between 30% and 50% of women who start this program of education are unemployed and they usually found job during this education or within 6 months after completion of training. For all participants are provided by the professional psychological support and counseling.

http://crnonabelo.com
http://ian.org.rs
http://iwebelgrade.wordpress.com
DISCUSSION

Analysis of the legal framework in terms of rights of women survivors of violence indicates that legislative framework of Republic Serbia is somewhat in line with the international legal framework in terms of social inclusion of women and vulnerable groups of women. This is primarily related to compliance with the documents of the United Nations, Council of Europe and European Union. However, reform of the legal framework relevant to the position of women in different spheres of society is unequal, sometimes inconsistent and even contradictory. However, when it comes to gender-sensitive records, it should be noted that there is important progress in the work of National Employment Agency, the Institute of Statistics, institutions of social care in recent years, who adapted their evidences to the monitoring need in area of gender equality. Several strategic documents recognize the group of women with experience of violence as a separate group on the labour market, but they are not recognized in relevant legislation, which would allow women survivors of violence certain rights regarding work and employment. Thus, where women who have experienced violence are legally recognized, mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and periodic reviewing of these documents are not even established.

Adoption of Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence by Serbia would pave the way for comprehensive protection of victims of domestic violence and introduce legal requirements in different areas of support. This Convention is the first legally binding international instrument in Europe to address the issue of prevention of violence against women, protect victims and punish perpetrators and it is currently regarded as the most advanced international instrument of human rights in this area. In Article 18, General obligations, in paragraph 3, it is stated, among other, that "the parties undertake to measures taken pursuant to this chapter shall be: based on understanding of violence against women and domestic violence from a gender perspective and are focused the human rights and safety of victims, based on an integrated approach, which takes into account the relationship between victims, perpetrators, children and their wider social environment; aimed at the empowerment and economic independence of women victims of violence". Article 20 - General Support Services - reflects that the parties are required to take necessary legislative and other

33 http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/treaties/html/210.htm (retrieved: August 2013). Republic of Serbia has signed the text of Convention on April, 4th 2012 and its ratification has been announced for the future period
measures and to ensure that victims have access to services that enable their recovery from violence. When necessary, these measures should include the following services: legal and psychological counseling, financial aid, housing, education, training, and assistance with employment.

The experience of those women who have suffered violence, indicate that there is multiple vulnerability and discrimination by institutions and employers and sometimes even wider social environment. Usually, they are women with relatively lower education and vocational qualifications, mostly unemployed and job opportunities for them are rare, low-paid and insecure\(^{34}\). Their position is further burden with the housing and economic vulnerability and insecurity, as well as lawsuits. They don't hesitate to accept any job offers, such as seasonal jobs, hard physical work and even to risk not to be legally employed. Most common reason for this is that they do not want to jeopardize lives of their children. Of particular importance for active job seeking, women see having access to additional support services - from housing, care for children and elderly, education services for children, etc. Need for establishment of such support services is recognized by representatives of NGOs, as well as representatives of institutional mechanisms for gender equality. Integration and connection of services (health and welfare, social programs, recruitment and training, employment programs) is one of the key tasks in order to meet complex needs of socially marginalized groups, because it unequally affects women in each of these groups, because of traditional links between the role of women in the care of dependent family members (children and elderly).

Existing measures and services in the field of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence both on local and national level, mainly include services aimed at stopping violence and relocation of women from situation of acute violence. Also, to a certain extent there have been developed forms of psychosocial and legal support. Problem of employment of women survivors of violence, these institutions do not recognize as systemic and as something that they should work intersectionally in the future. It is also noted that employees in these institutions are not in the same degree (sometimes not at all) sensitized and introduced with phenomenon of gender-based violence (specifically domestic violence), which is certainly big barrier to the development of specific policies in employment of vulnerable groups of women. Active labour market policy

\(^{34}\) Any tendency to make generalization and “socio-demographic and personality profile” of women victims of violence here in this paper, is unintentional and not my goal. It is dangerous to make such generalizations, because it is interfering with concepts and facts of gender based violence
should include incentives for inclusive economy and promotion of corporate social responsibility, in order to encourage companies to hire women from disadvantaged social groups, including women victims of domestic violence (according to European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion\textsuperscript{35}). Group of women survivors of violence should be viewed as a group with special needs on labour market. That can be achieved in direct cooperation of Centers for Social Work and National Employment Service - preparing training programs, training for improvement of self-confidence and job seeking. It is crucial to establish continuous and long-term cooperation of institutions of social protection, employment, employers and NGO sector. Only multi-sectored approach, networking and comprehensive support can be adequate way to soothe consequences of suffered violence and to ensure reintegration of women into the labour market and social environment from which they were forcibly separated. Support programs should be linked with the overall institutional support to overcome the violence. First and most important is to stop the violence, than to give to women psychosocial support and empowerment, financial and other support in the local community during the process of strengthening and building capacity for being able to attend different types of training (and also provide services for children, housing, etc.). After given all the above, through measures of affirmative actions support women in finding a job.

We should also mention that constant changing of the labour market and economy, social turbulences and global economic crisis, also have been reflected on employment of women survivors of violence. With all specific features that they have and specific context from which they come, they now need to adapt to new labour market conditions and "race" - to acquire new knowledge and skills and to seek for job in new areas of work that appear. Such requirement could be too much for them, a burden or even way of larger exclusion of these women, if they don't have basic and continuous support to overcome the violence and pass through psychological recovery of the same, as well as to be empowered to "take matter into their own hands". Underutilization of women's resources and endangered status of female working-age population remains serious problem in Serbia. According to data from the World Economic Forum, there is a strong correlation between gender equality and GDP per capita. Underutilization of women's labour force is one of the obstacles to faster economic growth and

\textsuperscript{35} http://www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/dossier/dossier.do?code=COM\&year=2010\&number=0758
there is much room for women to become an important resource for development, contributing to the overall betterment of society.

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This research points to some problems and shows current situation regarding employment of women who suffered violence. It also provides some practical recommendations, which can be later used for variety of local projects and initiatives in the area of empowerment and support for women who experienced violence. This analysis does not go deeper into the causes and reasons of identified problems, it has narrow focus and small size of sample, but it provides valuable inputs for further analysis, programs and initiatives. Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality, has already expressed interest to see final research results, because they are in the process of creating new Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-Based Violence in Vojvodina and in process of creating Policy paper for economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence. This research can therefore be valuable input, in the sense that it can provide important information on the current situation in this area. Also, publication of this work represents one of few researches on theme of economic empowerment of vulnerable groups of women in Serbia, especially women who suffered domestic or intimate relationship violence.
CONCLUSION

Support in employment of women survivors of domestic violence/intimate relationship has been sporadic and little investigated in Serbia, although results of this study showed that there is a great need for it. Achieving gender equality and adoption of the European social model, which Serbia tends to adopt, assume equal treatment of men and women in the core areas of life, such as employment and economic independence. In Serbia there is only partial compliance of national and European legislation in the field of protection and ending violence and improving women's position. Therefore, one of the most important recommendations from this research is to harmonize legislative framework with European, as well as to provide full implementation and monitoring of adopted laws and strategic documents at national, provincial and local level. Priority should also be creation of certain affirmative action in area of employment of women who suffered violence, and there is legal basis for such actions. These measures would contribute to establishment of comprehensive model of protection from domestic violence and to promotion and protection of women's rights, as guaranteed by international conventions which Serbia has signed.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is necessary to develop a system for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policy documents in the area of improving the status of women and protection of their rights.
- It is necessary to adopt a gender dimension in all legislative documents relevant to the protection of women from domestic violence and to improving their position in society.
- It is necessary that Republic Serbia ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence as soon as possible.
- At the local level to adopt all necessary strategic documents in the field of social protection, gender equality and employment, as well as within them to identify a group of women survivors of violence as a category of users.
- Increase the availability of active employment measures, according to needs and potentials of particular women, with emphasis on women from vulnerable groups (women survivors of violence). Measures of active employment policy should include incentives and inclusive economy, as well as promotion of corporate social responsibility, in order to encourage companies to hire women from disadvantaged social groups, including women victims of domestic violence.
- Integration and connection of services at the local level (social programs with employment and education) must become one of the key tasks in order to meet complex needs of a group of women survivors of violence.
- It is essential that institution of Center for Social Work, in accordance with its powers, creates individual plan of integrated services (in collaboration with other relevant institutions and local service providers), which must be in accordance with principles of social protection and rights of users. There is a need to include National Employment Service in this process.
- It is necessary to develop affirmative action in education, training and employment for women who were exposed to violence and who have started an independent life. These affirmative action measures include systematic psychological and legal support, as well as adequate information for potential users and employers. To create special programs and practices that meet needs of this group of women - individualized, but holistic approach.
- Promoting the employment of women survivors of violence in social enterprises.
- It is necessary to continuously work on the prevention of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, seek to establish zero tolerance for gender-based violence in society and develop specialized programs, measures and support services for women who have suffered violence, so that their return to work and in the community can be harmless as much as possible.
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3. Decision on Social Protection of City of Novi Sad, *Službeni list grada Novog Sada*, no. 38/11


5. Labour Law, *Službeni glasnik RS*, no. 18/05


9. Social Welfare Law, Službeni glasnik RS, no. 24/201

10. Social Welfare Development Strategy, Službeni glasnik RS, no. 108/05

11. Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-Based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for period 2008-2012, Službeni list APV, no.9-3/08


Web sites:


3. Project “Towards comprehensive system to end violence against women in Vojvodina” (Ka sveobuhvatnom sistemu za zaštitu od nasilja nad ženama u AP Vojvodini), Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. http://hocudaznas.org (retrieved: August 2013)

4. Project The Good Bag (Dobra Torba), http://dobratorba.rs (retrieved: May 2013)

5. Project Decent Work for Everyone (Dostojanstven rad za svakog), http://crnonabelo.com (retrieved: March 2013)


## ANNEXES

### Review of thematic structures in used semi-structured interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire for women who suffered domestic violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- General information (socio-demographic data - age, marital status, children, education, occupation, specific circumstances of her life/functionality, employment status)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Violent relationship and seek for help or justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Working/employment history (Job seeking history)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Received and used services from National Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incomes, financial help, payment obligations (child care, elderly care, court process, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Connection between violence and working/job seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Domestic violence and support for employment – knowledge, attitudes, opinions and personal experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire for employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- General information about company (employees, gender structure, women’s age structure and job positions in company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Company’s employment policy (Values; The Women's Empowerment Principles; Employment policy toward marginalized groups/women/women from various vulnerable groups; Corporate Social Responsibility; Needed affirmative actions towards women who suffered domestic violence; Support and help for employee who suffered domestic violence; Future plans in this area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Corporate social responsibility with particular focus on local community – target groups, types of work and help, target issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gender sensitive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cooperation with National Employment Service (experiences and future plans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opinions and attitudes toward different marginalized/vulnerable groups with special focus on women – selection process, working environment, type of support in order for them to be competitive on labour market</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire for NGO’s representatives (working with women who suffered domestic/intimate relationship violence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Types of services; Number of unemployed users (women) during previous year; Number of most used services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Help for job seeking and support in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- NGO's experiences in cooperation with representatives of public institutions and employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opinions and attitudes about needs for affirmative measures and systematic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Local community - practices, experiences, developing of good examples, local strategic documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Role of employment in recovery process of victim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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36 Under each of thematic structure, there is set of several open or closed type of questions
### Questionnaire for representatives of National Employment Service

- Internal policies, regulations and documents regarding different marginalized/vulnerable groups on labour market; existing of special measures for them, with special focus on women victims of violence
- National employment strategy 2011-2020; National Action Employment Plan 2013, Local employment action plans
- Programs and measures for women and different groups of women
- Actions toward users – women victims of violence
- Public works in context of research theme
- Gender dimension in creation and monitoring of employment policies
- Participation in local/national/international projects regarding increasing employability of women
- Possible supportive employment measures and programs for women victims of violence

### Questionnaire for representatives of Centers for Social Work

- Review of cases of domestic violence, given services
- Keeping records of women victims of violence
- Special measures for women victims of violence
- Recognizing of this group in different laws and documents; local documents and strategies; future plans
- Projects in local communities; involvement of Centers for Social Work
- Affirmative measures in employment for victims of violence; Increased availability of other supportive social protection measures
TABLE 1. – INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION 37 - Overview of international documents that the Republic Serbia, as a member of the United Nations and the Council of Europe has adopted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1946);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UN Doc. A/34/46) and General Recommendation no. 19 Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/47/38 UN Doc.) (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Declaration on Violence against Women (A/RES/48/104) in 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/45, the elimination of violence against women (E/CN.4/2003/L.11/Add.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1450 (2000) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on violence against women in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1582 (2002) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 2002 (5) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1681 (2004) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe &quot;campaign to combat violence against women in Europe&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 1 - Review of institutional mechanisms for gender equality

Institutional gender equality mechanisms in Serbia

- Gender Equality Council of the Republic Serbia
- The Gender Equality Committee of the National Assembly of the Republic Serbia
- Ombudsman of the Republic Serbia
- Commissioner for the Equality of Serbia
- The Gender Equality Committee of the Parliament of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
- Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality
- Provincial Institute for Gender Equality
- The Provincial Ombudsman
- Local Commission for Gender Equality

37 For purposes of this research, data were downloaded from the web site http://hocudaznas.org (retrieved August 2013.)