**HOMENET EASTERN EUROPE**

**Introduction**

The most invisible group of workers in the informal sector are home workers - mainly women who do paid work in their homes.

In the past the informal economy is used primarily as a tool to support the development of small business. As this is an important policy measure for small businesses in the informal sector, today it was recognised that the existance of informal and home workers requires the adoption of specific policy measures or organisations to meet their needs.

According to a report by the Council of Europe home-based work in the 90s was widely spread in Italy and Spain. It also mentions that information on home-based work is easily found in countries where there is a special law for home-based work, or special provisions for control of home-based work, as in Austria, Germany, Holland, Norway and Ireland, even when these requirements are not met (Ireland, Netherlands and Norway). Belgium, Greece and Turkey have never attempted to formally determine the number of homeworkers. It is also noted that there are more and more home-based workers, even outside industrial production. The report also talks about the high percentage of women among homeworkers: 70% in the UK to 90-95% in Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands.

In connection with the above information, on 27.05.1998, the European Commission approves recommendations for ratifying the Convention on Home Work from all EU countries. Thus, according to the Commission will be made further effective legal regulations of home work and the achievement of equal opportunities between men and women, including home-workers. The reason is that the high level of protection that provides the Convention is in line with the priorities of the social program undertaken in the euro area, whose focus is on improving the working conditions of homeworkers, as well as pledged in the European employment strategy, equal opportunities labor to both sexes. So far, only seven European countries - Albania, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Macedonia - have ratified the Convention. Amongst these countries, only Bulgaria, Bosnia and Macedonia are countries moved from a totalitarian regime to democratic governance. Although, there is no a social policy which aims to protect the labor rights of home workers in the both countries.

It is observed a government disengagement to protect labor rights of home workers by early 2000. Consequantly, a lot of NGOs, for protection of the rights of homebased workers, are born. They have new look to the informal economy. To increase publicity, validity and legality of home work organisations from the Balkan countries, a declaration on building HomeNet network was adopted at a declaration in March 2012.

**DECLARATION**

The home-based work is a growing global phenomenon comprising more than 100 mln. people working at home. Most of them are women. Usually they work informally and are not registered by the official statistics. For more than four months representative organisations of home workers and unions from the Balkan countries have conducted a research on the home workers issues.

On 25-27.03.2012 in Sofia an international conference was held with topic “Building HomeNet East Europe”. During the final part of the conference the representatives of the organisations from the Balkan states came to the unanimous opinion that mostly NGO’s and some union representatives in Bulgaria and Romania deal with the issues of home workers, and, in a whole, informal workers.

From the participating countries,  ILO Convention 177 was ratified in Bulgaria and Albania. Bulgaria has also a law for the homeworkers. But this does not imply social policy regulating the home-based labor.

Given these circumstances, the organizations

**DECLARE**

That it is necessary to create a Eastern Europe center for union support to the informal workers, in particular home workers, as part of the HomeNet East Europe network.
The main objective of the Centre: Legal regulation of labor and social rights of home workers and all workers in the informal economy.
To reach this objective, the organizations will fight for:
- Ratification of ILO Convention 177;
- Implementation of the “2002 ILC consensus” about decent work conditions in the informal economy;
- Increase publicity, visibility and validity of the home workers, using the experience of WIEGO and GLI

**Organizational phases:**1. Forming of a Leading Secretariat with the participation of one representative from each Balkan country with a three-year term of office.
2. Establish and maintain regular contacts with trade unions and governments.
3. Hold Campaigns, rallies and demonstrations at national, regional and international levels to ratify and enforce C177.

4. Helping the existing organization in co-operating with each other and mobilizing their common efforts to improve home workers’ conditions.
5. Publication of quarterly newsletter and creating of a web site.
4. Organization of exhibitions, fairs and festivals of homeworkers’ products.

**Funding:**1.Membership fees by each member organization.
2. Funding from external donors

Signed the Declaration on 27.02.2012 in Sofia:

***Albania:***

Organization: **Gruaja Intelektuale Pogradec (Intellectual Women of Pogradec Albania)**

Contact: Shpresa Blaceri (President)

Registered as NGO

38 paid-up members (home-based workers), mainly young women

Membership fee: € 1,-- per month

Has statues. President is elected for five years.

Strategy plan for 2013 discussed and adopted at General Assembly

Albania has ratified C 177 but there is no law/policy on home work. The workers they are reaching are all self-employed so that C 177 would not apply.

The “Intellecutal Women of Pogradec Albania” is a new member of HomeNet Eastern Europe. It is a NGO with the aim to help women and young people facing social problems, so that they don’t leave their country and keep their own traditions. They claim to reach out to 100 home based workers. The target group is talented, skilled women.

The NGO helps to identify markets and tries to bring together shop owners and workers. There is no organized production. The NGO organizes professional skills training. Through contact to the mayor they were able to get space provided for free (for 3 months; peak time when tourists visit the town) where the workers could sell their products. They work together with other NGOs as to jointly market the products. They are planning their own exhibition and want, together with partner NGOs, rent a shop. Expenses will be paid by the membership fees.

***Armenia:***

The contact to Armenia has been established only recently through a personal contact between Vili and the Director of a registered trading company in Armenia (Crafts Fellowship –manufacturing and marketing products of craftsmen)

After the Conference the ***“Armenian Association of Homeworkers”*** was established as a NGO

President: Arsen Torosyan

Vice President: Liana Avetisyan

Coordinator (contact person) : **Hermine Vardanyan**

Formed: April 2013

The Association has statutes. The assembly is the highest decision-making body of the organization. The assembly elects the members of the Board for two years. The Board elects the president for two years. The Board gathers during the meetings, that take place every 6 months. It organizes all activities of the organization.

33 individual members, all self employed.

Membership dues: 500-1000 dram (€ 1-2) per month

Objectives of the organization: to organize and to sell the products, support in marketing and design and information of rights; promote ratification of C 177

There is the assumption that there are many home-based workers in Armenia, working for factories, but mainly informal.

***Bulgaria:***

The following information is taken from the report from Chris Bonner (2012):

**Association of Homeworkers (AHW)**

Formed 2002

Contacts: Violeta Zlateva

Members:

Institutional: Association of Home-based Workers

Cooperative of Home-based workers

domestic workers

 street vendors

 People with Disabilities

50 000 individual members

Membership dues: Constitution stipulates member dues are 1% of the minimum wage. There are exceptions when the homeworkers have difficulties in paying this fee so they pay a smaller amount- but they still pay. The paid dues are spent in the regional structures. The coordinators themselves pay their dues to the national office in Sofia.

Structures: There are local structures which choose a coordinator. There are 22 coordinators and they are elected by the home-based workers from their section.

The coordinators participate in a coordinators meeting on a national level and the elect the board of directors.

***Georgia (new):***

Organization: **Transport workers’ union**– affiliated to Georgian Trade Union Centre (GTUC), to the

ITF (International Transport Workers’ Federation) and ETF (European Transport Workers’ Federation)

Contact person: **Lavrenti Alania** (President)

The union is organizing mini-bus drivers, (3.000 formal/ 5.000 informal) informal. The membership fee is not sufficient to finance the structure. They can only maintain their structure because they are affiliated to the GTUC. The new government will establish a new Labour Code (which was de facto non-existent under the old government) and intends to formalize the informal transport sector. They organize in the sector through collective agreement negotiations/strikes. They also have a telephone hotline.

Trade Union of Georgian Automobile Transport and Highways' Workers unites employees of organizations where 8443 overall individuals are employed and has established 102 primary unions with 7691 members. The 6 individuals are employed at the sectoral branch central apparatus. The Primary Union organizations of the Trade Union of Georgian Automobile Transport and Highways' workers are present in the whole territory of Georgia; in Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Poti, Batumi and other regional cities and towns. Majority of the primary union organization members are employed at municipal transportation institutions (mini-busses, busses, private commercial transportation and loading companies). Also, our members include national and regional highway workers and contractors tasked with construction and repair of the roads.

In various large cities there are informally employed transportation drivers which do not receive wages and are not members of our union; however, we are doing everything in our power to defend their labor rights, protect their interests, provide them with normal labor conditions, allow them to utilize our legal advisor free of charge, participate in the commission responsible for choosing the winner when a tender is announced in the informal sector. We are trying to provide these employees with normal labor conditions and aim to unionize them after their conditions improve.

The sectoral branch is functioning under difficult conditions, however, due to our unionizing efforts in the last period we have unionized twice the amount of workers in comparison to the last period. The highest rate of unionization was noted during the civil transportation reform which meant that old mini-busses were replaced with new, modern commercial mini-busses. Also, the old governmental agency that was in charge of roads and transportation was replaced with new transportation companies that work more efficiently and have larger capacity. Our branch has made strong contributions in initiating and fighting for Georgian Labor Code reform. Overtime pay is decided through cooperation between the two sides.

The sectoral branch works in accordance to the yearly plan that is established through quarterly board meetings. A special meeting may be called during extraordinary situations. During these meetings the board makes proposals and decides to accept or decline propositions pertaining to key union issues that are later to be introduced to higher union authorities.

***Kyrgyzstan (new):***

Organization: **CACSARC-kg; Central Asia Crafts Support Associations’ Resource Centre in Kyrgyzstan**

Contact person: **Svetlana Balalaeva** (Programme Manager)

The NGO was established in 2000 in Bishkek and started off to operate in six countries in the region: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and later Mongolia). It has now 76 member organizations (artisan groups/craft development centres). According to the statues, the umbrella organization was moved in 2008 to Almaty in Kazahkstan. The Kyrgyz office decided to register as an own entity and founded “CACSAC-kg” . The activities were in line with the previous ones: the preservation and development of traditional culture and handicrafts and the integration into the world crafts market, which would include the improvement of skills of the artisans and to assist them in protecting their professional, civil, economic and social rights.

Regionally they are covering 5.000 crafts people. They are not a MBO, but serve as an umbrella organization of different groups. They are selling their services, organize fairs and exhibition, help to connect to the foreign community in the country but also beyond Kyrgyzstan (i.e. US). They raise money through projects so that they can pay overhead costs (paid staff, office etc.).

It is worth noting, that CACSARC-kg is putting a lot of effort in undertaking research what kind of products would be selling well. They organize trainings for the workers at different levels. The first step is to identify the most talented designer(s) in Kyrgyzstan to train the workers. But they also partner with an US NGO “Aid to Artisans” to try to find out what is on demand outside of Kyrgyzstan. They have been inviting designers from the US, who are developing together with the workers new products, based on their traditional methods of production. Through these contacts, it was also possible to participate in fairs in the US, which they now do on a regular basis annually (about 10-12 workers). The workers were able to increase substantially their income situation, so that, for example, they were able to pay for their own travel fees to the US. They are participating at the annual Asian fair and they have been invited to an important Hungarian fair.

They are also lobbying to form a union. There are considerations to go beyond homebased work. At the moment there is a good relationship already with the union of the light industry in Kyrgyzstan.

***Macedonia:***

**Association of Homeworkers-Dora Dom- Macedonia**

Contact person: Ilija Boevski

Registered: 15 May 2011

Has individual members – 500

No membership fee

Has statutes, programme, assembly, executive board and chairman

All work for the organization is done on a voluntary basis

“Dora Dom” had contacts with the government on the implementation of C 177 which they ratified 3 Oct 2012. They meet with the Ministry of Labour. They expect that they will have a law in place one year from now. In 1 ½ years are national elections and they would need to show what they have achieved.

Dora Dom only operates in the city of *Strumica* because of lack of funds to extend to other parts of the country. They have been doing mapping, have participated in fairs and festivals and provided individual help for members.

All their members are covered by basic health insurance through their status as “unemployment”. They need to register annually as unemployed. Regarding pensions, Dora Dom is pushing to be treated as agricultural workers for which a lower than average threshold exists (€ 50,-- monthly) in order to be entitled to receive a pension. The other alternative would be to register as a company. However this is very costly and the members are not able to afford it. There would also be no advantage in terms of being able to apply for a credit because one needs two co-signees which have a secure (for example government) job.

***Montenegro:***

**Association Sharenica Plievlia** – operates like a cooperative

Coordinator: Milica Chavich

Registered 28 August 2008

Members: about 50 individuals in 2012, now about 200

No membership fee, but about 10-20% of the income goes to the association, which is used to pay for additive materials, electricity etc.

Has statutes, 5 board members and executive manager

About 150 of the 200 members are working closely together. They are producing souvenirs for tourists. 50 are on and off and only stepping in when there are more orders. The members distribute the orders among themselves and thus all profit. They don’t have middle men but deliver directly to souvenir shops. They are getting in touch with the companies through participating in fairs. They are sharing space for work with a women’s right association “safe home” and don’t have to pay any rent. They don’t have enough turn over so that it would be worth registering as a cooperative. The workers neither have health nor pension coverage. Voluntary contribution to the health and pension schemes would be € 100,-- but the average income of each worker is only about € 150,--. The minimum, wage is Montenegro is € 200,--. There is no other government assistance because the assumption is that they live from their land, which is in fact the case, but it is not sufficient to make a decent living. In order to survive they are vending products they produce, for example vegetables.

There is an estimated total of 400.00 home-based workers (own account) working in the sector

***Serbia:***

**Association Ruka- Association of Home-based Workers for the Promotion and Protection of Workers** **Rights and Benefits**

Organization in process of registration

Contact: Bratislava Gogic

Started working November 2011

Nov-Dec: mapping 50 HBWs in 22 towns

Jan-Feb: mapping 50 HBWs in 6 towns

Feb 2012: Made contact with 4 organizations- there are 840 organizations registered in Serbia and are planning to contact all of them – mixture of orgs e.g. SMMEs)

Members: 100 HBWs and 4 organizations with 150 members ( potential 250)

Membership fee proposed: 1200 din annually

Structure:

Coordinator East Serbia:

Sladana Jovanovic +3811648908631

Coordinator South Serbia

Verica Radzevic +381 63201612

Coordinator for part of Serbia- Voivodina

Ruzica Iovanovic

Coordinator for Belgrade Region

Gordana Dicic +381 1113554016

***Turkey:***

The organization was not present at the Conference, because of budget problems

Eveksenli Galisanlar ve Sosyal Haklar Dernegi- Home-based Workers and Social Rights Association

Contact person: Aycan Cankurt

Formed March 2011

Members: 45 individuals, of which half are HBWs

There is a membership fee – but no-one pays. Fee 5 TL per month ( approx. 2 euros)

There is an elected body – a 5 person executive board and a constitution. The organization is registered.

***Ukraine (new):***

The organization was not present at this Conference.

Free Trade Union of Entrepreneurs of Ukraine (FTUEU)

Contact person: Valentina Korobka

ABOUT FTUEU ‐ FTUEU started its existence in Ukraine after small and medium

entrepreneurs joined to protest opposing a Tax Code in November 2010. Since then the

FTUEU plays a key role to protect entrepreneurs and self‐employed workers’ rights both

within KVPU(Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine), and nationwide. FTUEU is

also affiliated the International Department of the KVPU trade union federation and to StreetNet International.

The union is mainly a union of market vendors of about 29.000 members (of which are 9.000 paid-up members). So far the union is not organizing home-based workers.

***HomeNet Eastеrn Europe* – the network of home-based workers**

***HomeNet Eastern Europe***

**1. long-term**:
- Legal regulation of home work in both its forms - employed and self-employed;
- International recognition;
- The development of the united markets.

**2. Current**
- Creation of national structures in all countries;
- Classification of home work;
- Ratification of Convention 177;
- Promote the network in different countries.

**Tasks:**1. Continually inform and consult home workers in employment issues;
2. To conduct training of new coordinators;
3. Interaction with local authorities and government for legislative changes in the field of home work;
4. Search finances to support the organization;
5. To organize national statistical surveys of home work;
6. To prepare and issue membership cards and membership records.

**Activities:**1. Formation of cross-border centers;
2. Syndicate of home workers;
3.Orgazation of fairs, festivals and exhibitions:
4. Building online store - homemadeware.org
5. Opening shops for exchange of domestic production.