

HomeNet Eastern Europe – the network of home-based workers



Steps leading to HomeNet Eastern Europe

- Initial Conference on 27-29.03.2013 in Sofia
- Purpose of the Conference: Gradually building “HomeNet Eastern Europe”.
- Representatives of the present organisations came to an unanimous agreement to join forces with the aim to better support and protect homebased workers
- Representatives were mostly from NGO’s, but also union representatives from Bulgaria, Georgia, Ukraine and Romania
- From the countries present, the ILO Convention 177 was ratified in Bulgaria and Albania. Bulgaria has also a law for homeworkers. But the regulations lack enforcement (i.e. social policies)

HomeNet Eastern Europe

Long-term:

- Legal regulation of home work by providing protection to wage homebased workers and own account homebased workers
- International recognition
- Development of united markets based on a joint resolution

Currently:

- Creation of national structures in all countries
- Classification of home work by own surveys: place of work; classification of products
- Ratification of ILO convention 177
- Promoting the network in Eastern Europe

The First Congress of HNEE

17. 07. 2014



The Organizations of HomeNet Eastern Europe



Congress of HomeNet Eastern Europe

- Fashion show featuring about 50 models from Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro and guests from Spain.
- Welcome speech on behalf of WIEGO was by made Karin Pape.
- Members of HomeNet Eastern Europe reported about their activities (April 2013-May 2014)

What are the main problems which all countries have?

- Lack of markets for homeworkers' products
- Member organizations from Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania organize only own account workers
- Member organizations from Bulgaria, Georgia, Macedonia organize mainly own account workers but also wage workers
- All member organizations noticed lack of proper legislative framework for homeworkers (both wage workers and own account workers)

The Association of Home Workers - Bulgaria

Beginning – 2000; **Formed** -2002

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 they elect the board of directors.



ALBANIA



Gruaja Intellektuale Pogradec (Intellectual Women of Pogradec)

Beginning – 2011;

Membership dues: 38 paid-up members (own account homeworkers), mainly young women

- Albania has ratified C 177 but no law/policy on home work.

The organization after inclusion into the network - 2012

1. Outreach to 250 additional homeworkers, of which 150 joined the organization
2. Establishment of a national organization by combining the newly established local organizations in 4 regions

MACEDONIA



The Association of Homeworkers - Dora Dom

Registered: 15 May 2011;

Dora Dom only operates in the city of *Strumica*

The organization after inclusion in the network – 2012-2014

1. “Dora Dom” contacted the government with regard to the implementation of C 177 which they ratified on 3 Oct 2012;
2. 5 new structures were organized;

3. All home workers have health insurance, and they have all the rights for medical treatment as those who are employed

4. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia offers eligible projects for self-employment and credits with good conditions by the Employment Agency, which homeworkers can benefit;

TURKEY



The Home-based Workers and Social Rights Association in Diyarbakir

- **Formed** March 2011
- The organization is registered in Diyarbakir

Organization after inclusion in the network – 2012-2014

- 94% of home-based workers are self employed. The industry is working with external contractors.
- Hundred of women of whom only 6% have benefited from health insurance.
- 80% of women work at home, producing food, pasta, ravioli, jam, yogurt, bread, doing construction work, such as building houses, which is very uncomfortable, braid lace, embroidery, jewellery and more.

SERBIA



The Association “Zlatna Ruka”

- Nature of the organization: Registered NGO (since 2007).
- **Organization after inclusion in the network – 2012-2014**
- It started working in November 2011
- Members: 100 HBWs and 4 organizations with 150 members (potential 250)
- Structure:
 - East Serbia: 40
 - South Serbia: 40
 - Voivodina: 50
 - Belgrade Region: 120

MONTENEGRO



The Association “Sarenica Pljevlja”

- Nature of the organization: Registered as NGO (since 28 August 2008)
- **Organization after inclusion in the network – 2012-2014**
 1. Supporting women with ideas and abilities for starting their own collective
 2. Empowering women through a special education and consultation programme which aims at improving women's economic status (funding from various sources)

UKRAINE



The Free Trade Union of Entrepreneurs

- Affiliated to Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU)
- Affiliated to StreetNet International
- The organization was neither present in 2013, nor in 2014, due to the political situation in the Ukraine.
- Members: 27.000 market vendors (January 2014), but only about one third are paid up members

GEORGIA



The Union of Informal Transport Workers

- The union is organizing mini-bus drivers, (3.000 formal/ 5.000 informal). The membership fee is not sufficient to finance the structure.
- **The organization after inclusion in the network – 2012-2014**
- The union joined the network because it is committed to help to organize homeworkers
- Homeworkers in Georgia (women 70% and men 30%) are organized in a crafts association; industrial outworkers (seamstresses) are organized in a different organization

ARMENIA



The Association of Homeworkers

Formed: April 2013

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

KYRGYZSTAN



The Public Foundation MSDSP

- Name of the organisation: **Public Foundation MSDSP**
- Nature of the organization: Regional network / project funded by different donor organizations. MSDSP is providing financial assistance, so that the women can buy, for example, equipment for their traditional crafts production.
- In the project they reach around 100 women.
- The Kyrgyzstan Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP KG), an initiative of Aga Khan Foundation, is a locally registered public foundation which seeks to improve the livelihoods of selected communities in Kyrgyzstan's mountain areas.

Countries Observers

- **Novi sindikat** - Croatia
- Members: 3 500 workers (in different sectors, but no homeworkers)
- They are part of the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC)
- Formed: 2008

- **Association “Budućnost”** – Bosna and Herzegovina
- Formed: 1998
- no members

It only works on projects related to equality of women

They suggested to the government the ratification of Convention

Findings and Conclusions

- The homeworkers in HNEE are informal, but they are registered in formal organizations (mainly NGOs).
- All of them have statutes and democratic procedures.
- Most of the organizations are small and/or don't have any resources
- Most of the organizations are local, and do not cover the whole country. - Bulgaria, Serbia, Georgia and the Ukraine cover beyond the local level
- In all countries, the earnings are low (about or even below the minimum wage)
- All own-account homeworkers in the region have the problem to access markets for their goods and to achieve fair prices which would enable a decent income
- In all countries the organizations complain about the lack of support by the government
- In some countries (Bulgaria, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), the ILO Convention on Homework, C 177, is used as a tool, although the implementation of C 177 would only apply to industrial outworkers.

Observations and Considerations

- Analysing in depth working conditions of homeworkers and fighting for equal standards of homeworkers (employed and own account) to other workers in the country
 - Organizing training and qualification for homebased workers to address the problems of adequately responding to market needs (i.e. nature of products, quality, design, reaching potential costumers etc.)
 - Creation of working groups for specific issues: developing and sustaining organizations, incl. leadership training; professional skills training (design, marketing, innovative techniques etc.)
 - Exchange of good practice and documenting good practice cases
- Legal regulation of home based labour.