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***WOMEN'S ROOM  
REPORT FOR  
2004.***

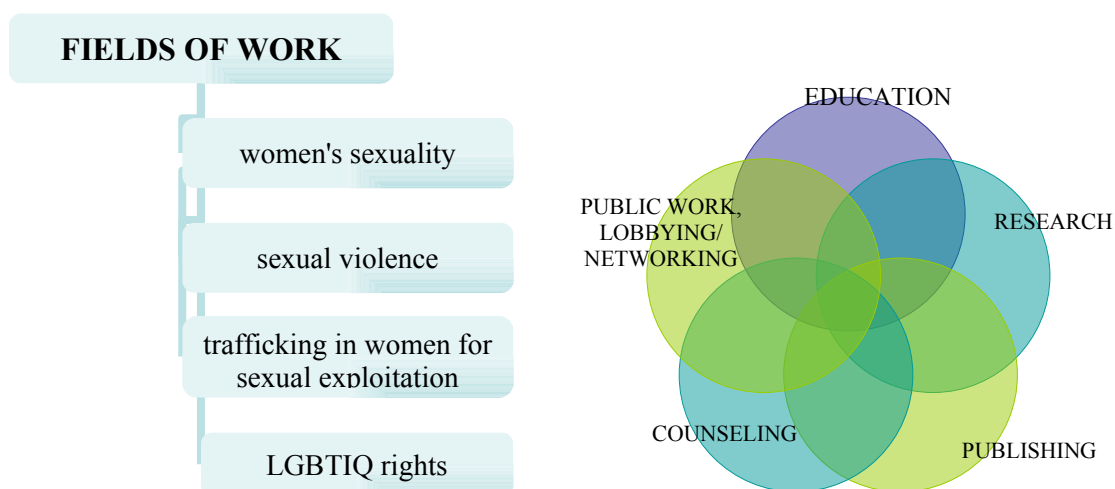
***WOMEN'S ROOM***

# W H O

**Women's Room** is a non-governmental, feminist organization working on raising the awareness of women, institutions and the public about women's sexuality and sexual rights, through education, research and public work. It is located in Zagreb, Croatia and works on the local level as well as throughout the region.

**Women's Room** was founded in order to achieve the following aims:

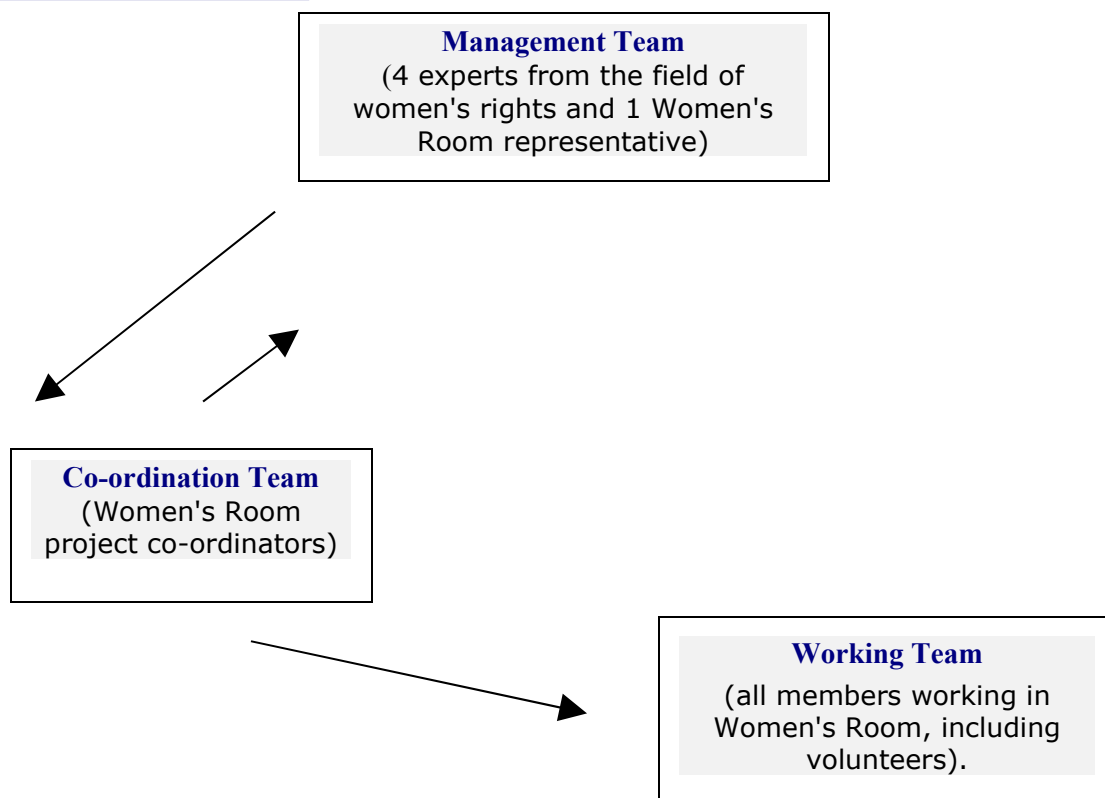
- raising the awareness of women about their basic human rights;
- actively combating all forms of sex, gender and sexual discrimination;
- raising public awareness about the problem of sexual violence against women and the LGBTIQ population;
- prevention of sexual violence against women;
- promoting interdisciplinary research about the prevalence and effects of sexual violence;
- promotion of positive attitudes about women's sexuality, sexual health and freedom of choice;
- empowerment of the LGBTIQ population in the achievement of their basic human rights;
- capacity building of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations in order for them to develop quality cooperation and ensure an efficient and multidisciplinary approach in the development of prevention programs against sexual violence and for the treatment of women survivors;
- actively supporting society and relevant institutions in changing attitudes toward women who have survived sexual violence.



The Women's Room team during 2004 consisted of **Maja Mamula** (Coordinator), **Nera Komarić** (Coordinator), **Jelena Poštić** (Coordinator of LGBTIQ Programs) and **Voljana Kapelina** (Office and Financial Coordinator). **Dunja Bonacci Skenderović** worked with us as a full time volunteer.

Besides the Women's Room team mentioned above, twenty volunteers participated in our work and all our activities and actions, contributing to the development of Women's Room with their energy and dedication. During the year 2004 **1175** volunteer hours were realized.

#### Women's Room Structure:



During 2004, Women's Room members devoted their efforts to obtaining their set goals, but also to the development of the organization, evaluation of their work and achievements, and plans for further organizational development.

Despite its short existence, Women's Room has earned the status of one of the more prominent feminist organizations on the civil scene, and among institutions in the field of work relevant to the issues Women's Room deals with. This is best seen through our publications, numerous workshops and seminars, as well as through media presence. (Women's Room activities – **Review**)

**“Instead of thinking about WHERE YOU ARE, think about WHERE YOU WANT TO BE. It takes twenty years of hard work to become an overnight success.”**

Diana Rankin

## WHY

Our work is predominantly based on the consciousness of the unequal position of, and discrimination against, women in society, with an emphasis on certain specific groups such as women survivors of violence and the LGBTIQ population. Moreover, our work focuses on discrimination on the basis of gender expression. Unfortunately, among all existing and continuing forms of discrimination, it is typical of our society that numerous actions and campaigns contributing to inequality, initiated by the state, political parties, church and other institutions, are also encountered.

**Abortion:** Several times a year, the church authorities, together with central and conservative parties, initiate the question of prohibiting abortion.

*“Is it not sad, brothers and sisters, that today, abortion having been legalized, every unborn human being is in danger of being swallowed by the Dragon of Death – this with the help of his/her own mother, his/her own parents and medical staff, with the help of such a fatally spread mentality to which even Christians are subject.”*

(All religious communities to demand the prohibition of abortion, Jutarnji List, 19.11.2004)

**Unemployment:** Economic insecurity also has an impact on the existing inequality and there are no signs of improvement.

*“The woman we are interviewing is just one of the 171.5 thousand unemployed women registered. The percentage of unemployed women today is 58.5% and the number is increasing constantly. Therefore, it is no wonder that the percentage of employed women in Croatia is relatively low, being approximately 37%, whereas the percentage of employed men is roughly over 50%.”*

(There is no hope for a female MA who has been queuing for work for twenty years, Novi List, 23.08.2004)

**Women in politics:** Since the HDZ returned to power the number of women in Parliament, as well as at the local level of power, has decreased which indicates that we still do not have a stable representation of women in politics. Instead, the representation of women depends significantly on the current political situation and on the unequal representation of women in the majority of the political parties.

*“The number of women, i.e. their participation in politics, is very low and unsatisfactory. A more active inclusion in organized political life is still hampered by strong prejudices such as: women are less competent; women have much more difficulty proving their competence; men are suspicious about women but women themselves are also skeptical about female politicians. Despite the legal framework, the principles are not implemented.”*

(The role of men in reifying gender equality, 14.06.2004. Zagreb Public Health Institute, [http://www.publichealth-zagreb.hr/novosti/uloga\\_muskarca\\_ravnopravnost\\_spolova.htm](http://www.publichealth-zagreb.hr/novosti/uloga_muskarca_ravnopravnost_spolova.htm))

**Sexual education:** In spite of endeavors by a team of independent experts who have drafted a pilot program for sexual education, only the Teen Star Program is being carried out in Croatia. However, that program violates basic human rights with its religious attitudes.

*“The decision, taken last week by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, refused to take into account a professional program which would have introduced sexual education in schools, and has again triggered controversy connected to sexual education in schools... This year primary school children in Croatia will only be able to be informed about their sexuality on the basis of the Teen Star Program which instructs them, for example, that contraception does not protect them against sexually transmitted diseases and that it destroys the very idea of sexual intercourse. It teaches that sex is acceptable only in marriage. The introduction of a program of sexual education such as this was adopted last year by the former Minister of Education, Vladimir Strugar, upon the recommendation of the entire church community led by the Bishops’ Conference.”*

(The Catholic Teen Star Program teaches that sex is negative, 02.11.2004, <http://www.gay.hr/portal/opsirno-2002.php>)

**Violence against women:** Notwithstanding amendments to the Family law, violence against women is still a particular problem in society. Violence against women cannot be cured with insensitivity, conservatism or a lack of willingness to provide further education and cooperation, a fact that can be seen in the work of some institutions.

*“The number of registered cases of family violence in Zagreb during the first nine months of the year has increased 58% compared with the same period last year. The police in Zagreb have, accordingly, registered 2,706 cases of family violence, of which 1,653 cases have been closed with a warning and 158 with a criminal investigation. The absolute majority of the perpetrators, up to as much as 87%, are men.”*

(On the occasion of the International Day of Combating Violence against Women: male perpetrators, female victims, Novi List, 26.11.2004).

**Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation:** Although the Croatian government continuously ignores the existence of the issue of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, the phenomenon is nevertheless real and not limited to foreigners. Namely, there are an increasing number of cases in which female Croatian citizens have been identified as victims of trafficking in the countries of the European Union. Unfortunately, the victims are stigmatized and they lack understanding and help.

*“On All Saints’ Day, a 21 year old Ukrainian woman died in a hospital in Mostar. The young woman had been living “in the possession” of local pimps in a cellar. She was half dead when admitted to the hospital. She died a couple of hours later. For a long period of time no death has triggered so many stories on the shores of the Neretva. The post mortem examination yielded the result stating that she had been suffering from AIDS, syphilis, hepatitis C and tuberculosis... In the nightclub “Daleka obala” two students, Ana and Jasmina, drinking their Coca-Cola, commented upon the case of the dead prostitute: “What to say, a whore! That is that...”*

(AIDS in the Damned Yard, Globus No. 727, 11.2004)

**Artificial insemination:** Despite the progress in the field of medical science, the church strongly opposes artificial insemination even in the case of heterosexual married couples where artificial insemination is legal. Thus, a discussion of the possibility of introducing medically supported artificial insemination for homosexuals is entirely excluded.

*“Artificial insemination can be requested by persons who are married or in a de facto relationship. Moreover, a woman who is living alone has the right to artificial insemination if the National Board of Medically Supported Insemination approves it. However, the law prohibits the possibility of artificial insemination for homosexuals. We were not able to accept such a possibility, stated Hebrang... It is prohibited to sell or to buy egg cells or sperm. Further, so-called substitute motherhood is also forbidden...”*

(Right to artificial insemination for women living alone, Jutarnji List, 01.10.2004)

**Alimony:** Although Minister Kosor has been talking about the introduction of alimony funds for all the single mothers who are not able to obtain alimony from their ex-husbands or ex-partners for common children, unfortunately nothing has been undertaken.

*“The alimony fund which was, according to Jadranka Kosor, planned to be set up on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, was not established and probably will not be established. It is entirely clear that this will not happen by the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2006, state Jutarnji List. The explanation of the minister states, according to Jutarnji, that more detailed analyses indicate that a fund such as that would represent “an unnecessary system running in parallel with the existing system still operational to be used to acquire alimony.”*

(20 million HRK from the state, Jutarnji List, 26.02.2004)



Workshop: Women's sexuality, Domine, Split, October 2004.

## WHAT, WHERE AND HOW

In order to achieve planned goals, Women's Room decided on a multidisciplinary approach in the areas of sexual rights and sexual violence, in order to incorporate the results of different projects and activities.

During 2004 members of Women's Room conducted **18** lectures, workshops and seminars for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina with a total of **234** participants.

We held **10** lectures, workshops and seminars for representatives of different governmental institutions with a total of **327** participants.

We also participated in the work of Women's Network of Croatia (actively in **5** actions), on **6** public panels and round tables and in **4** book promotions. Furthermore we actively participated in **41** international and national conferences and meetings.

Our texts, commentaries and interviews were published in **10** daily newspapers and/or journals.

We gave interviews for **7** television and **2** radio shows.

We actively participated in the work of different networks and/or national bodies: the coordination team of the Feminist Summer School, the working group for development of national strategies against violence against women, the national team against trafficking in human beings, the initial committee for implementation of sexual education in schools, the V-Day organization committee and the work of the SEE Q network.

During the year 2004 we were visited by a significant number of friends from Croatia, the region and the world. For instance, by representatives from Macedonian institutions who

were on a study trip organized by the Croatian Society for Psychological Help.

## Projects and Programs in 2004<sup>1</sup>

### **Sexual violence – theory and practice**

The book *Sexual violence – theory and practice* in more than 200 pages encompasses a review of recent literature and research, and information about the work of relevant institutions in Croatia and the world. The book contains the results of the research into the attitudes and knowledge of students in their final year of relevant universities about sexual violence. 25 authors from Croatia and around the world participated in the development of the book. The book is published in both Croatian and English.

### **Research: Attitudes and knowledge of students in their final year of relevant universities about sexual violence**

Research was conducted with **282** final year students (male and female) of 10 relevant faculties for occupations dealing with the problems of sexual violence. The results confirm that there is significant gender difference in sensitivity about sexual violence, a high prevalence of sexual violence among adolescents and that education about sexual violence is insufficiently incorporated into educational programs. Most of students think that education about sexual violence is necessary in larger proportions.

### **Implementation of prevention programs against sexual violence**

7 workshops and lectures were conducted for students of different colleges, 11 workshops for seven NGOs and 4 for representatives of governmental institutions. The main topics were women's rights, violence against women, sexual violence, sexual rights, and the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.

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<sup>1</sup>For all additional information about particular activities, projects and programs, please ask Women's Room directly.



As part of this project a planner with information about violence against women for the year 2005 was published.

### **Education of youth about problems of trafficking in humans**

6 workshops were conducted for young people in which basic themes connected to the problem of trafficking in human beings were covered. Support was given to the young people, in order for them to develop action plans in their local community. Since the project was a great success and the reactions of participants were good, the project will be continued in 2005, and it will include a manual on this topic, with young people assisting with its development. The aim of the manual is providing basic information and possible activities of raising citizens' awareness in their communities.

### **Education of medical doctors about the problem of trafficking in persons**

The seminar was organized for 20 medical doctors of different specializations from Croatia on the problem of trafficking in persons. The seminar was run by 8 experts in different fields (law, criminology, medicine, psychology, psychiatry and social work) the aim of the seminar was the creation of an action protocol for medical doctors in cases of work with victims of trafficking.

### **ACTA founding**

Women's Room and the Partnership for Social Development initiated the founding of an international organization whose aim is to follow up the work regarding the problems of trafficking and corruption. ACTA joined 10 more organizations from Eastern Europe. Numerous joint meetings and seminars were held dealing with action plans and the development of ACTA.

### **Co-operation with Women's Network Croatia (WNC)**

Women's Room participates in the work of WNC through numerous activities:

- participation in the organizational team of the *Feminist Summer School*, including lectures held by Women's Room members.
- collection of statements from SOS and counseling centers across Croatia, in order to make posters and distribute them to women's organizations for the promotion of the International day against violence against women.
- participating in the annual meeting and most of the activities, campaigns and events.

### **Regional Project of Lobbying, Advocacy and Public Policy for LGBTIQ Rights -ReLAP**

First *SEE Q Network* regional project, which includes regional co-ordination and policy changes. The aim of the project is the education of LGBTIQ activists, the strengthening and expansion of the SEE Q Network in order to provide successful lobbying and advocacy for policy changes within the framework of national and international legal systems, and the implementation of basic human rights for LGBTIQ persons, including sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and intersex characteristics.

Graffiti from Virovitica, spring 2004



## WHERE WE ARE GOING

The purpose of our existence as an organization is to help support the development of a medical-social system in this society; also to influence the changes in political attitudes, which directly form the mechanisms that enable or disable the implementation of women's rights, especially when all forms of sexual violence and LGBTIQ population rights are in question.

We find that implementation of women's rights is part of our responsibility to which we devote ourselves by systematic lobbying through formal and informal contacts with politicians and public figures.

One of our primary aims is the promotion of the status of NGOs as equal and professional partners of relevant governmental institutions, which are often resistant towards the idea of equal co-operation with NGOs. We are aware that these kinds of statements are common and that they often have little impact, but we hope that our work and efforts will manage to break this imaginary but almost impenetrable wall.

Women's Room in the year 2005 is continuing with its work, in line with identified societal needs, visions and organizational capacities and with the basic propositions of our work, which are based on systematic approaches, commitment, quality and devotion.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our work in the year 2004 was supported by: Kvinna till Kvinna, World Day of Prayer, World Learning, Mama Cash, OSCE for ACTA, Zagrebačka Banka, Open Society Institute Zagreb, Care International.



Workshop: trafficking in persons, Delfin, Pakrac, May 2004

### Women's Room Activities - Review

WHAT	HOW	NUMBER	PARTICIPANTS	WHERE & WHEN
<b>Educational Programs</b>				
a) NGOs in Croatia and the region	workshops, seminars, lectures	18	234	Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>(throughout the year)</i>
b) representatives of governmental institutions	workshops, seminars, lectures	10	327	

<b>Research Program</b>	research: <i>Attitudes and knowledge of students in their final year of relevant universities about sexual violence</i>	1	sample N =282	University of Zagreb (April - June)
<b>Counseling</b>	phone and face to face counseling	-	37 counseled	
<b>Publishing</b>	Sexual Violence in Schools – manual for school professors	400		Zagreb, January 2004
	Women’s Room leaflets	400		Zagreb, July 2004
	Women’s Room bookmarks	600		Zagreb, September 2004
	Women’s Room Planner for the year 2005.	500		Zagreb, December 2004
	Sexual violence – theory and practice	350		Zagreb, December 2004
<b>Lobbying, Networking and Public Work</b>				
Women’s Network Croatia	- Participating in organized actions	4		Zagreb, Poreč (throughout the year)
	- organization of WNC action on the occasion of the International day against violence against women	1		Zagreb, October 2004
Public panels and round tables	we participated as guests or participants	6		Zagreb, (throughout the year)
Book promotion	we participated as guests or promoters	4		Zagreb, (throughout the year)
Participation in international and local conferences, meetings and seminars	we participated as speakers, lecturers and guests	41		Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FRY Macedonia, Vienna, Ljubljana, Geneva

In order to make all our activities visible and to ensure recognition by more than just a limited circle of our co-operators, we strove to have our work acknowledged in the media during 2004. Members of Women’s Room had **10 interviews or articles** published in 5 daily newspapers and 4 journals in Croatia, participated in **7 TV shows** (6 times on Croatian national television and once on RTL) and **twice on radio shows**. Topics covered by the media in the year 2004 were: sexual violence (10), sexuality (4), sexual minorities (4), and the international day against violence against women (1).

