Call for Applications for the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute (WHRTI), 2013-2015

Deadline for applications: 23 August 2013

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF), in cooperation with its partners the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR) and the Network of East-West Women (NEWW), and in cooperation with representatives of the Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives (ECPI) are pleased to announce the Call for Applications to participate in the training programme of the Fifth Round of the Women’s Human Rights Training Institute (WHRTI), 2013-2015.

The Institute is a unique initiative founded by the three partners in 2004 it is the first-of-its-kind programme aimed at building and developing the capacity of young lawyers from Central and Eastern European and the Newly Independent States (CEE/NIS) for litigation on women’s rights issues, including:

- violence against women,
- sexual and reproductive health and rights, and
- employment discrimination.

The Institute, organized by the BGRF in cooperation with its partners, already has successfully completed four rounds: WHRTI 2004-2006, WHRTI 2007-2009, WHRTI 2009-2011 and WHRTI 2011-2013 (www.institute.bgrf.org), and trained more than 80 lawyers.

The WHRTI provides the participants advanced and in-depth knowledge on women’s human rights protection in the three areas noted above. The WHRTI improves their practical skills in writing and advocacy for development of strategic litigation in the region both at the national and international levels through the use of regional and universal human rights mechanisms such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Optional Protocol to ICCPR. The WHRTI also gives lawyers an opportunity to get acquainted with the EU standards in the field of equal treatment of women and men, including the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

ELIGIBILITY:

Twenty participants will be selected among practicing lawyers and legal counselors working with human rights or women’s rights NGOs in the region. Successful applicants should:

- have a substantial and sustainable interest and a demonstrated commitment to women’s human rights advocacy and to using the law creatively to secure redress for women’s rights violations.
- have a professional relationship/affiliation for at least one year prior to the application with an institution/organization that has capacity to litigate women’s rights cases or has experience with litigation and preferably focuses in its work on women’s human rights.
- have demonstrated interest and basic knowledge of the international universal and regional human rights law, legal standards and instruments,
- be committed and available to actively participate in all the four sessions of the Institute (approximately one week every six months) and to be involved in the intersessional work.
- have fluency in written and spoken English, and advanced English language comprehension.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES:
The completed WHRTI application form and all supporting documents (see the application form for details) must be sent to the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (BGRF) by 23 August 2013, to the following e-mail address: office@bgrf.org
or, by mail:
Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation
P.O. Box 938
1000 Sofia
Bulgaria

The applicants short-listed for an interview will be contacted by 5 September 2013.
The final selection will be done by the middle of September 2013.
The First session of the WHRTI 4 is planned for November 2013.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE:
The overarching objectives of the Institute are to:
- develop successful regional and country level litigation strategies on women’s human rights in CEE/NIS.
- build the capacity of lawyers in CEE/NIS to litigate women’s human rights cases at the national, regional and UN levels.
- provide continuous support and expertise for women’s rights litigation efforts of lawyers in CEE/NIS and seed new women’s rights litigation.
- strengthen the network of lawyers for women’s human rights’ strategic litigation in the region.

The WHRTI relies on a three-prong approach focusing on the developing jurisprudence in the three above mentioned fields of women’s rights. The WHRTI takes place in Bulgaria. It consists of four sessions convened every six months for a one-week session. The same group of participants work together for a two-year period. The working language of the Institute is English. The last two sessions are designed as moot-court sessions consisting of team work on hypothetical cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights, the CEDAW Committee and the UN Human Rights Committee. The team of lecturers and facilitators comprises of well known professors, experts, and practitioners from Central and Eastern Europe, the United States and Western Europe specialized in the topics of violence against women, reproductive rights and employment discrimination and have expertise on various aspects of the use of the international and regional human rights mechanisms for the protection of women’s rights. The alumni of the WHRTI are also involved as lecturers and facilitators.

The Institute participants will be trained to examine existing legal theories that are currently applied to women’s human rights violations, including anti-discrimination legal theories and multiple/intersectional discrimination of women, to participate in the multiple challenges posed by developing new legal theories in the field of women’s rights and to discuss their potential success in practice.

Specific litigation activities will be both continued and launched by the participants between the Institute sessions, supported by the BGRF, NEWW, CRR and other partner organizations, members of the network of lawyers-fellows of the WHRTI. The Institute also is planning to support...
additional initiatives such as joint research, litigation and advocacy initiatives by the participants and attendance at relevant international events.

All expenses related to the selected participants’ attendance at the four sessions of the Institute are covered by the organizers.

The project is implemented thanks to the generous support of our donor, the Open Society Institute – Budapest. Previous sessions also received financial support from other donors, including the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Global Fund for Women and Mama Cash.

WHRTI encourages the development of professional connections and networks among women’s rights lawyers in the region. Alumnae of the Institute include over 80 lawyers from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland (observer), Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. For more information on our alumni, see our website (www.institute.bgrf.org/). The alumnae of the Institute are establishing a network of women’s rights lawyers and are at the forefront of teaching, litigating and advocating on women’s rights in their countries. Some of them have already undertaken women’s rights litigation before the European Court of Human Rights and the CEDAW Committee. Several alumnae have worked at the Registry of the ECtHR in Strasbourg; another was appointed as the Human Rights Ombudsperson of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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