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WPON Chair Shares Experience and Results of WPON with the Association of Women Judges in BiH

On 23 June 2012 in Vlasica, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Chair of the Women Police Officers Network in South East Europe (WPON) Executive Committee, **Ms. Sanja Sumonja** from the Ministry of Interior of Republika Srpska, participated in a workshop held for the Association of Women Judges in Bosnia and Herzegovina and with the aim of strengthening of advocacy skills. Ms. Sumonja's presence created a unique opportunity for women from two distinct but similar associations to discuss common concerns, identify areas of possible cooperation, and learn from each other.



The workshop was jointly organized by the Atlantic Initiative in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), in collaboration with the Association of Women Judges in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Before the audience of women judges, Ms. Sumonja presented the activities and important results in the area of advocacy for gender equality in the police services. WPON members advocated for and established two associations of women police officers in BiH, the aim of which is to enable networking among women police officers and raise gender awareness in the police services. Most recently, WPON members developed *Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing Practice* offering the police services practical advice on how to better integrate gender equality into their work.

Development of the Guidelines was a unique regional endeavor as it was based on data about the existing policies and practices, which was provided by 9 police services in South East Europe and developed by a regional working group of representatives of police services and Ministries of Interior. Direct and extensive involvement of the MoI personnel from all WPON member states guaranteed regional ownership and applicability of recommendations from the Guidelines.

The presentation was followed by a lively discussion demonstrating great interest and positive outlook of the participants towards the network. WPON's existence, activities and results were graded as significant steps towards advancing principles of gender equality in the police services of the region.

[← Back](#)

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