

# Integration of the Gender Perspective into EU Development and Cooperation Policy

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According to the European Commission,<sup>1</sup> equality between women and men is a fundamental principle recognised in international human rights law, a common value of the EU and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU's objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion. Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress over the last decades on promoting equality between women and men. This is mainly thanks to equal treatment legislation, gender mainstreaming and specific measures for the advancement of women, as well as the implementation and monitoring of relevant EU agreements and frameworks.

A large body of European legislative texts is dedicated to equality between women and men. It mainly consists of various treaty provisions and directives concerning access to employment, equal pay, maternity protection, parental leave, social security and occupational social security, the burden of proof in discrimination cases and self-employment.

The EU's "Roadmap for equality between women and men" established the priorities for the period 2006-2010. Specifically, it combined concrete initiatives with the integration of equality between women and men into all EU policies and activities ("gender mainstreaming"), including external relations and development.

Progress on equality in the EU is measured every year and presented in a "Report on Equality between Women and Men," prepared by the European Com-

mission in close cooperation with all EU Member States.

A new "Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015)"<sup>2</sup> was adopted on 21 September 2010. It is a comprehensive framework committing the Commission to promote gender equality in all its policies. Building on the 2006-2010 Roadmap, as well as the European Pact for Gender Equality, the Strategy spells out actions in five priority areas defined in the Women's Charter, as well as in one area addressing crosscutting concerns:

1. Equal economic independence.
2. Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value.
3. Equality in decision-making.
4. Dignity, integrity and putting an end to gender-based violence.
5. Gender equality in external actions.
6. Horizontal issues (gender roles, legislation and governance tools).

The Strategy highlights the contribution of gender equality to economic growth and sustainable development and supports the implementation of the gender-equality dimension in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## **External Dimension of the EU's Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010**

Both the Roadmap and the 2010-2015 Strategy have as a priority the promotion of gender equality in external and development policies and, in particular, the promotion of gender equality in the European

<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=418>. [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

<sup>2</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION. *Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2011, ISBN 978-92-79-16981-6.

Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The EU's policy on the promotion of gender equality within the EU is closely related to the work undertaken by the Union in third countries.

In the context of the ENP, the EU supports partner countries' efforts to promote gender equality. The ENP Action Plans set out a jointly agreed agenda of reform priorities and contain the commitments of partner countries to engage in dialogue on related issues (human and women's rights) and to carry out policy and legislative reforms.

The EU remains committed to speedier achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to helping to attain the standards set by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as the objectives of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPfA) and the Cairo Programme of Action, as foreseen in the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015).<sup>3</sup> The "EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them"<sup>4</sup> offer guidance for conducting political dialogue and taking action, where appropriate, in individual cases of women's rights violations. The EU will continue to use its development policy to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

The EU and its Member States are key players in international development efforts and adhere to internationally recognised instruments and agreements, such as the CEDAW, the Millennium Development Declaration (2000) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (1994), the BPfA, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. The EU has also reaffirmed gender equality as one of the five key principles of its development policy in the European Consensus on Development<sup>5</sup> and has recently adopted the aforementioned EU guidelines on violence against women and girls.

The EU is strongly committed to gender equality in its development cooperation and individual relations with third countries. It promotes a dual approach of gender mainstreaming and specific actions combined with political and policy dialogue and acknowledges that gender equality is closely linked to the overarching development goal of reducing poverty. Among other actions mentioned under Priority 6 in the 2006-2010 Roadmap, the European Commission was to "strengthen gender equality in the Mediterranean region, including by organising in 2006 a Euromed Ministerial Conference on gender equality, preceded by a civil society consultation, which could lead to the adoption of an action plan."

### Bilateral Actions

Concerning bilateral external relations, gender equality has been included in all work plans defined under the ENP, and dialogue between the EC and its partner countries on this issue has been initiated in several subcommittees. Gender perspectives and equality between women and men are mainly included under three sections of the ENP Action Plans: the promotion of human rights; social policies and employment; and combating trafficking of human beings, especially women and children. In particular, most countries' plans include: strengthening the role of women in the political (policies related to electoral systems and processes), economic and social spheres, implementing the CEDAW and combating gender-based violence, including honour crimes and crimes related to personal status or family codes.

The 2008 Sectoral Progress Report on the Implementation of the ENP<sup>6</sup> notes that "Participation of women in social, political and economic life still has to be strengthened in varying degrees. Discrimination against women and/or domestic violence remains widespread. Further criminalisation of offences against women is needed. While substantial barriers remain, many countries have taken measures to further promote gender equality."

<sup>3</sup> Annex to the Council Conclusions on the MDGs for the UN Plenary Meeting in New York and Beyond, 3023rd Foreign Affairs Council Meeting, Luxembourg, 14 June 2010, [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/115157.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/115157.pdf). [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

<sup>4</sup> [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16173cor.en08.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16173cor.en08.pdf). [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

<sup>5</sup> Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus' (2006/C 46/01), [http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european\\_consensus\\_2005\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/european_consensus_2005_en.pdf). [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2009:0522:FIN:EN:PDF>. [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

To this end, it is worth noting that Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Morocco all have specific bilateral programmes on gender.

### Regional Euromed Context

At the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, held on 14-15 November 2006 in Istanbul, the partners agreed to work on mutually agreed objectives (within a common framework of action) over the next five years. It was moreover agreed that they would adopt “measures to achieve gender equality, preventing all forms of discrimination and ensuring the protection of the rights of women.”

The conclusions adopted by the Istanbul Conference were therefore aimed at strengthening: women’s political and civil rights; women’s social and economic rights; and women’s rights in the cultural sphere and with regard to the role of communications and the mass media.

In terms of the follow-up and review mechanism, the Euromed Committee was invited to “convene, at least once a year, a Euromed ad hoc meeting at [the] expert senior officials’ level to review the implementation of the [...] measures contained in [the] conclusions and to inform the annual Euromed Foreign Affairs Ministers Conference. A follow-up to the Euromed Ministerial Conference to discuss issues related to the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and the progress made [on implementing] these measures will take place in 2009.”

In the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the process established by the Istanbul Conference is a unique and pioneering method, as it has enabled the development of accompanying measures (technical and institutional capacity-building, such as training and/or the development of guidelines and frameworks of action, establishment of knowledge tools, policy review mechanism, etc.) financed by the European Commission aimed at supporting a regional intergovernmental consultation process and provides for civil-society consultations throughout the process.

To this end, the European Commission has developed several cooperation instruments:

- The “Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the Euromed Region” programme is an accompanying measure to support the cur-

rent activities of the intergovernmental cooperation process within the framework of the EMP and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). It contributes to the overall objective of supporting current dynamics and strengthening the capacity of qualified actors in order to promote equality between men and women and provide follow-up for the Istanbul Ministerial conclusions.

- The “Investing in People” (IiP) programme aims to strengthen the capacity of civil-society organisations active in the field of promoting women’s rights and equality between women and men.
- The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR): The Mediterranean countries are eligible for country-based support schemes aimed at supporting civil-society organisations that promote human rights. The promotion of women’s rights is explicitly recognised as a priority under this objective.

In addition to these instruments, TAIEX and twinning can be used to further develop joint Euromed actions.

However, the model is still evolving. It is necessary to refine its methods and forge a unique and specific identity for it, as well as to identify complementarities with other international intergovernmental schemes in order for it to be recognised as an efficient and concrete contribution to the full implementation of the international conventions related to the human rights of women, such as the CEDAW, and relevant recommendations of the UN human rights system, such as those deriving from special procedures of the Human Rights Council or from the Universal Periodic Review.

### Challenges for the Istanbul Process

The part of the Istanbul conclusions presented as the Action Plan should not be regarded as an operational plan for action but rather a political declaration identifying potential and/or intended areas of action. It names only one tool for the follow-up, namely an ad hoc expert committee, and it does not identify the reporting processes or tools the committee will use. The Istanbul Process moreover fails to define its own added value and is considered by some of the partners concerned as a duplication of existing models.

Strengthening women's role in society is an indispensable part of the region's development. That is why the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean (13 July 2008) states, "The future of the Euro-Mediterranean region lies in improved socio-economic development (...) and knowledge. There is a need to increase co-operation in areas such as education, (...) strengthening the role of women in society."<sup>7</sup>

The Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the UfM (4 November 2008) likewise emphasises the need to strengthen the role of women in society, stating, "As part of the follow-up to the Istanbul Ministerial Conference held in 2006 on 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society' and in view of a second Ministerial Conference in 2009 to be held in Morocco, the Ministers encourage further concrete initiatives to accelerate the implementation of the Istanbul conclusions. A possible outcome could be a concrete set of joint activities in all fields approved in the Istanbul Ministerial Conclusions."

A second Euromed Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society took place in Morocco on 11-12 November 2009. The conference's objectives included: to increase awareness of the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPA) and explore opportunities for using it as an advocacy tool for social and legal change; to explore synergies between the national, regional and international frameworks for the promotion and protection of gender equality (IPA, CEDAW, other UN mechanisms, the EMP, the ENP and the UfM); and to strengthen civil-society cooperation and coalition-building in the Euromed region on gender equality and women's rights.

At the Marrakesh Conference, the Ministers gave a boost to the Istanbul Process, which promotes equality between men and women and had been set in motion three years earlier, by making the Framework of Action more effective. Priorities were established and the follow-up arrangements for the planned improvements were made more efficient.

Also at the Marrakesh Conference, the UfM agreed to create a regional foundation and co-operation network to advance women's rights and to set up a multilateral Euro-Mediterranean Observatory on

Violence against Women. The foundation, to be launched with the support of the World Bank, will establish its first sites in Paris, Marrakesh and Byblos, Lebanon. The UfM decided that a women's foundation could "coordinate energies and means" and "create a network of women around the Mediterranean." The foundation will be publicly and privately funded, exclusively on a voluntary basis, but the World Bank will make an initial contribution to get it off the ground.

## Conclusions

Since its inception in Barcelona in 1995, the EMP has devoted both political attention and financial resources to gender equality. This focus is in accordance with international processes and instruments, such as the BPfA or the MDGs, as well as with the implementation of the CEDAW. Despite these efforts by the EU, the full potential of the Euromed or Neighbourhood instruments has not been used to accelerate the process of achieving full equality between men and women in the Mediterranean. Substantial funds dedicated exclusively to this priority are still quite scarce. Indeed, they are almost absent from bilateral cooperation with the Mediterranean partners, which accounts for the lion's share of the funds allocated to cooperation with them. Instruments such as twinning, TAIEX, ENP National Action Plans, etc. are almost "gender neutral" and give scant attention to 50% of the beneficiaries in the region. In light of recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Algeria, Morocco and Libya, the statement by the EU High Representative, Lady Ashton, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day<sup>8</sup> should not be viewed as "mere" lip service. In her statement she said, "Women have played a crucial role in bringing about change in Northern Africa. Amidst violence, women have joined the struggle for change. We hope that the key role that women have played so far will be reflected fully in the institutional changes that are already under discussion in the region. Women must be at the heart of the discussions over the future order."

<sup>7</sup> [www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/07/0713\\_declaration\\_de\\_paris/Joint\\_declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Paris\\_summit\\_for\\_the\\_Mediterranean-EN.pdf](http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/07/0713_declaration_de_paris/Joint_declaration_of_the_Paris_summit_for_the_Mediterranean-EN.pdf) [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]

<sup>8</sup> [www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=24426&id\\_type=1&lang\\_id=450](http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=24426&id_type=1&lang_id=450). [Last accessed on 6 June 2011.]