

## Foreword

Beyond the progress that has been achieved, Euro-Mediterranean societies have not yet given women the position they deserve. In both the North and South, they are underrepresented in terms of economic and political powers and overrepresented in precarious, unstable, poorly paid, poorly regarded and insecure jobs, when not confined and invisible in unpaid domestic work. In the current context of economic, institutional and social crisis in Europe and the Mediterranean, we are witnessing a blatant regression in women's rights, greater inequality and a massive feminisation of poverty. Covid-19 has only aggravated this scenario, including gender-based violence.

However, we are aware that political action, strategic mobilisation and feminist solidarity, including between different regions and generations, are bold responses to the questioning of women's achievements and rights and the acquisition of their freedom and physical integrity.

Since its inception, the IEMed has participated in several forums to improve women's human rights and enhance their visibility in all areas through various networks of Euro-Mediterranean societies. Through the Anna Lindh Foundation, the IEMed produced the document "The role of culture and media as key instruments for the evolution of mentalities", a preparatory document for the 1st Euromed Ministerial Conference on gender held in Istanbul in 2006. The conclusions of the ministerial conferences in Istanbul, Marrakech and Paris and the last one in Cairo in late 2017 have created great expectations because they include references to the revision of discriminatory legislation, to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and to positive and concrete actions.

The Istanbul Process was the first regional intergovernmental consultation and dialogue on women's rights. Ministerial conferences are a unique regional tool for the promotion of gender equality, as it was conceived and negotiated by all participating countries and not initially imposed by the European Union. In its principles it recognises the role of civil society and has resulted in an extensive output of reports and documentation by the European Commission and significant contributions from civil society.

Since September 2013, the IEMed has been the headquarters of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF). This Euro-Mediterranean foundation, as a regional structure, seeks to meet various challenges to address the dispersion of knowledge, the lack of shared experiences and the isolation of egalitarian actors, with a single goal: gender equality. Its action seeks to unify equality actors and allow them to work together through academic research, forward-thinking reflection on gender and women, and support for

projects related to this field. Among the many projects in the Southern Mediterranean, the EMWF has compiled two follow-up reports to the Euro-Mediterranean conferences, the first in 2015 and the second in 2018.

In this special issue we are presenting of *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* on “Las mujeres mediterráneas rompen barreras / Mediterranean Women Breaking Barriers”, the articles set out reflections and good practices by different agents of equality: academics and professionals from the associative and institutional world, with the aim of contributing to the 5th Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society, which will take place in autumn 2022 in Madrid. They are witnesses to the current state of the main strategic issues of the conference but particularly want to stress their recommendations to ensure that they are useful to the equality actors, as they precisely define what hinders the emancipation of women and include proposals to overcome obstacles and move towards the ideal of full equality, both legally and in practice.

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