



RECOMMENDATIONS

**Towards a new European Neighborhood Policy:
Women's Rights and Gender Equality - Core Values of ENP
Towards peace, security and prosperity in the Euro-Med Region**

EUROMED FEMINIST INITIATIVE IFE-EFI



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Acronyms

BpA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EC	European Commission
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
EU	European Union
Euro-Med	Euro Mediterranean
IFA	Istanbul Framework of Action
IFE-EFI	Euromed Feminist Initiative
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UfM	Union for Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution



Introduction

Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI is a policy network that advocates for gender equality and women's rights as full part of democracy and citizenship, against militarism, war and occupation, for the right of peoples to self-determination. Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI is acting for strengthening the women's self-organizing, voice, action and power by supporting and creating safe spaces for exchange across the different socio-political borders and building common analyses in the respect of the different contexts.

The present document is produced in the frame of the EU consultation process launched in March 2015 in order to contribute to the civil society input with feminist analyses. The recommendations of the Euro-Med Women's Rights Conference organized by Euromed Feminist Initiative on 7-8 June 2013 in Amman to the 3rd UfM Ministerial Conference on "Strengthening the role of women in society" Paris 2013 in the frame of the Istanbul-Marrakesh Process have been our road map; they have helped to strengthen a common Euro-Med analyses on the tight link between democracy, women's rights, gender equality and development.

The present document is a result of a long process analyzing the ENP's impact on women's rights in the Euro-Med region. To this end the Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI held a Euro-Med Seminar on the 26th May 2015 in the European Parliament to finalize the discussions and issue recommendations to the review of the new ENP.

This document analyses the relevance of ENP from women's rights perspective. It emphasizes the importance of having women's rights and gender equality as cross cutting issues and founding values for all policies and demonstrates ways of incorporating them. It underlines the crucial role of a free and independent civil society, in particular women's rights organizations, in the policy elaboration on national and Euro-Med regional level and recommends some priorities for the new ENP in order to make it relevant in supporting progress and development in the whole region.

1. Relevance and role of the ENP

For the women's rights movement in the Euro-Med region, ENP is a very important framework for cooperation with neighborhood countries. As such it should remain a single framework provided that it gives a greater support to partners countries committed to democratic reforms in the respect of gender equality and human rights for women and men in line with the 'more for more' and 'mutual accountability' principles, as well as in the respect of the international and regional instruments that support gender equality and women's rights (among them CEDAW, BpA, UNSCR1325 and the subsequent ones, SDGs, Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, UfM Ministerial Conclusions 2013 and the ongoing process on Strengthening the role of women in the society). There should be an increase, or a willingness to increase, cooperation with a further number of partners.

ENP should be sourced and formed around the tractability to expand and/or allow for policy to transcend through varying neighbors, in the respect of the above mentioned rights. It should be based on the values of equality between women and men and in the respect of their human rights as stated in the council conclusions of the review of ENP April 2015.

ENP is therefore a major single EU instrument that can/should promote gender equality as inseparable from democracy and development and mainstream it to other key priority areas within the ENP, in order to



introduce the idea that gender equality can be a driving force when addressing other social issues. This is to suggest that strongly endorsing the notion of prioritizing gender equality has a breadth of contribution to offer in all focal areas of development such as: climate change, environment, renewed economic and social policy, etc. The aim of gender equality policies is to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and responsibility in all areas of life. The principle is that everyone, regardless of sex, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, to participate in the political and public life on equal footing and to live without the fear of abuse or violence

ENP is as well an important instrument to promote democratic values beyond the immediate neighbors' borders. When developing an ENP and incorporating countries whose recent and/or current climate has been temperamental, there lays a responsibility to aid in acquisition of stability within these regions and to ensure any political advances are done so with human rights and gender equality at the forefront of those transitions. Any negotiation should be done through due political and democratic processes. Safeguarding gender equal human rights and legitimate democratic procedures should have precedence within discussions. ENP should demonstrate absolute respect and application of international women's rights instruments to fill the gap between them and existing laws, while counteracting the increasing influence of religions in political assemblies, legislations and all spheres of public life.

2. An economic and social development based on respect of fundamental human rights and social justice

Agreements should be based on real and accountable partnership framed by respect to human rights of women and men, equality of interest, peoples' self-determination according to international charters. Economic policies should not over run human rights and gender equality. The EU must commit itself as well to develop independent political will towards these values in the EU countries.

Economic partnership should be based on cooperation with foreign economies, to engage in non-exploitative manners of labor that respect and protect the full and fundamental human rights of all citizens - women and men. This is a key when supporting sustainable economic and social development strategies. At the forefront of such transfers to labor market procedures, women who make a large part of workforces, are notably the low paid ones. To address this injustice and discrimination, sustainable development programs should be based on the full respect of their human, economic, social and political rights. By encouraging economic programs, ENP should pay a special attention not to reproduce gender stereotypes at the labor market and in the society as a whole. Therefore the adoption of a holistic approach to development programs is needed, meaning that they should respect gender equality and mainstreaming of gender on all levels.

An ENP must contribute to the eradication of all vestiges of gender bias in business communities and labor markets. Comprehensive anti-discrimination laws notably within the personal status laws, as well as within work field, an increase in women's representation in public and political life, in addition to wider gender equality measures and policies should be promoted in the ENP on bilateral and multilateral level. Provision must be designed for women to seek protection in the various fields of engagement, whether at work, at home or in public spaces.

In light of the economic crisis, reconfiguration of the EU economic directive becomes paramount when reviewing and establishing an effective ENP. Recent acts of austerity have threatened the most vulnerable in the society and have simultaneously failed to address the current economic hardship. Renegotiating and



ultimately eradicating the current neo-liberal trajectory of the EU is paramount when aiming for fundamental amendment of ENP – what did not work in the EU should not be promoted in the neighborhood. Gender and sexual equality as human rights and democratic rights must remain as a continued focal point when developing and confronting these issues. The dialogue needs to deal with the challenges at hand in the whole region: i.e. poverty, social exclusion and cohesion, human rights, space for NGOs to work – in addition to issues of concern to European governments such as the environment, climate change, energy, transportation and depollution of the Mediterranean. The structured dialogue ought to work thematically, e.g. local authorities, mobility and visa facilitation, economic and social equality and human rights, while the incorporation of gender equality analyses should be politically demanded to crosscut each field.

3. A women's rights perspective on migration and mobility

Wars and military policies, unfair economic policy towards the neighborhoods created sources of migration and forced mobility and the EU has to take their part of responsibility. Migration issue should be considered in the respect of international humanitarian law and from a human rights perspective, but most national integration policies have been characterized by a strong negative dialogue portraying migrants as “burden” to our societies. Main consequences are the stereotyping and stigmatization of migrants without acknowledging their economic, social and cultural contribution to European societies. It is important that the experience and expertise of migrant women's organizations as well as organizations that have been supporting migrant women is used by decision-makers at local, regional, national and European level and that migrant women's organisations are heard. When addressing migration, the special needs of women should be raised in accessing social insurance, health insurance, labour market. State should propose vocational programs for migrants to incorporate them in the local labour markets and employment. The EU should ask for the abrogation of bilateral agreements that keep migrant women submitted to the laws of their countries of origin. Victims of sexual abuse and torture should be given asylum to Europe.

The wars and the deteriorated economic and social situation have pressured people to run from misery and violence. The impediment of the free movement of persons, penalizes, excludes and forces many immigrants to go underground. This is contrary to our conception of democracy and to a region in which we wish to live together. Migrant women, who actively participate in the production of wealth, are doubly exposed to social exclusion, violence and poverty. They face double discrimination on the labor market because of the opposition created intentionally between them and their country of origin. All women living in the same country must enjoy same rights: right to work, to education and vocational training, right to social welfare and health protection, as well as right to their own bodies. Therefore the ENP should ensure measures to guarantee the right to free movement of all persons, the right to full citizenship of both women and men and as stated above, the right for women who are victims of gender-based violence to be entitled to political asylum. The ENP should ensure measures that welcome war refugees via applying the EU legislation and rescue operations on the high seas instead of aiming at destroying the smugglers' boats.

4. Looking for solutions to solve conflicts and crises via political, peaceful and democratic means

Peoples in the Euro-Med region are currently going through uncertain times. Unprecedented deterioration is taking place and threatens severely peoples, their civil society and their right to freedom, justice and peace.



Women and women's rights defenders are in particular targeted. The tragic situation in countries of war, the occupation of Palestine and their severe repercussions on the whole region have created a climate of fear, intimidation and insecurity.

In order to demonstrate the commitment to democracy, for each of these issues the EU should clearly state that gender equality and the respect of the universal human rights of women and men are values and principles inseparable from democracy and therefore from all transitional processes striving towards democracy building. The ENP should promote political solutions to all conflicts in the region. Crises in the neighborhood give rise to trafficking and empower the prostitution system. It is necessary to strengthen laws in EU that curb trafficking and to adopt laws based on feminist analyses of the link between trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution.

Stability should be redefined as most often the implementation of women's rights are been delayed with the excuse of "stability". Therefore, the ENP should promote economic and human development as well as human security where violence against women should be addressed as an inseparable part. We question the notion of "prevention of the radicalization" because it can open the door to abuses or restrictions of fundamental rights.

The role of women's rights and the participation of women in the peaceful transitions towards democracy should be specially emphasized and the ENP should make the EU response more effective in supporting the partners "committed to building democratic societies and undertaking reforms, in line with the "more for more" and "mutual accountability"" principles. The countries affected by conflict should be approached, peacefully, using all diplomatic measures and encouraging non-violent, political means to address the conflicts. Such action must tend towards cooperating with other global political actors, and no alternatives must be negotiated that fail to incorporate and prioritize humanitarian actions, in the best interests of and in consultation with women's rights and human rights defenders.

History has shown that military interventions cannot resolve conflicts and never bring freedom to people. The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) do not incorporate human security for women and men; neither encourages disarmament due to its dependency on NATO. The UN concept of human security escapes the fact that the threat against women's security lies also within the relations of their affiliation. Women are the victims of violence committed by their nearest partners and men in their family and in their own home. At the same time violence used by armies and armed conflict in war justifies rape and sexual humiliation in addition to violence against women at home. Security problems constitute the everyday multi-layered discrimination women experience within societies that sustain their oppression, subordination, inequality and the feeling of insecurity. Achieving sustainable peace therefore calls for comprehensive political actions. Regulations are needed when an EU partner is violating the human security of another partner; this means to freeze and at least not upgrade the partnership with the aggressor-partner.

Therefore the security sector reform should be given a priority to considering the link between gender, peace and security, using different tools and methodologies which incorporate gender analyses from all perspectives: academic, political, social, and economic. A demilitarization of the region is possible by exercising political will in the research of solving conflicts via political means and allocation of the necessary resources to social and civil gendered needs, while stopping the sales of weapons.

The participation of women's rights CSOs and defenders should become a structural part of peace negotiations and conflict solutions as preventive mechanism and in the light of the implementation of the UNSCR1325 on women, peace and security.



Discrimination against women cannot be disassociated from all other forms of oppression and domination. Just and sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved by the recognition of self-determination of all peoples and of an independent and sovereign Palestine State. Structural inclusion of women's rights defenders in a participatory and comprehensive peace process in the respect of UNSCR1325 is a condition to allow transitioning towards democracy, enhancing respect of human rights of women and men alike.

Understanding the differing needs within certain regions, based on the specific economic, political and social state of that particular area, would allow for a more integrated approach to ENP implementation.

5. Promoting networking and dialogue and recognizing the role of the civil society

A working definition of civil society as part of the dialogue should be value-based on international human rights and women's rights values. The process should provide support to existing, independent, regional and national civil society women's rights networks and initiatives. The European Commission should encourage and enhance the cooperation between and with the independent civil society, always including women's rights organizations and feminist initiatives and networks that provide expertise and analyses and promote change.

The role of a strong and vital civil society is an indicator of development. Civil society should be real partner in putting policy and strategies and action plans and enable them to continue to monitor the States commitment to change. Democracy and engagement of civil society can be enabled only when it has freedom and independence, access to stakeholders and grassroots.

Tools and mechanisms that ensure such engagement based on democracy are needed. We are witnessing in the whole region degradation of civil society. On one hand there is a limitation of means for the organizations and women's rights CSOs in particular. On the other hand there is a tentative of instrumentalization and control of civil society by governments. Governments and international institutions are taking space and means of the civil society in order to limit its independent voice and to promote and support "their good civil society" contributing to the maintaining of the dominant system. A strong and independent civil society is a driving engine towards transformative changes of the patriarchal societies. Increased financial support to an independent and vocal civil society is a demand to promote democratic values.

It is needed to underline especially the role of the women's rights organizations and networks in civil society, as civil society does not a priori mean gender equality and universal human rights for women.

The EU should encourage enforcement of action against gender inequality in all spheres, as well as the development of gender equality laws and programs.

6. Religious dialogue, understanding of each other's cultures and cultural diversity

Increasing understanding of each other's culture, religious dialogue and respect of cultural diversity are basic components of good cooperation if they are framed by the principle of universality of human rights, including women's human rights. This means that women's full citizenship should supersede and even disqualify all reference to specific culture or religion. Religion, culture or tradition cannot justify any oppression, discrimination, and psychological, economic, social, physical or legal violence and abuse against women.



Any ideas pertaining to a multi-cultural society should be avoided as long as such a term implies cultural relativism and justifies violence against women on behalf of culture, tradition or religion. All efforts should be made to ensure that women are protected from cultural values that serve a patriarchal system seeking merely to sustain oppression of women.

7. Fighting all forms of discrimination

When referring to different underrepresented categories, the ENP should always take into consideration that women are not a category, as disabled, youth, minority and other “vulnerable groups” but are part of all categories as they are 50% of the population. Thus ENP should address this reality beyond recognizing that they are in fact underrepresented institutionally. The ENP should seek to tribute greater acknowledgment of the intersectional minority categories women may fall into, rather than broadly cast women as a category in itself, e.g. LGBT women, disabled women, women of color. Similarly we must avoid any ‘etc.’ when documenting and creating discourses around such issues, in order to gradually illuminate the exclusion of any unrepresented groups. ENP should clearly state that it is built in the respect of the universal human rights of women and men and the values of gender equality. It should state at its preamble how the gender equality policy is defined, taking the example of the most developed countries, as Sweden.

By reaffirming the aim of gender equality policies is to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and responsibility in all areas of life. The principle is that everyone, regardless of sex, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, to participate in the political and public life on equal footing and to live without the fear of abuse or violence.”

In this way the ENP give the message to the neighbors about its ground bases.

8. Priority areas of focus:

- **Conditionality to respect of the human rights of women and men as universal human rights**

Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI claims that an ongoing gender analysis of the ENP with the EU neighboring countries is a necessity. It is as well needed to make the ENP an instrument to discuss the structural link between women’s rights, democracy and development on bilateral and multilateral level. “The more respect for human rights, gender equality, universal values, the more you get”. As an influential political body, the EU should utilize such a position to actively engage in supporting the change of corrupt governments in order to protect the people. ENP should demonstrate clear conditionality in regards to respect and application of international women’s rights instruments during the negotiations with the governments, to fill the gap between them and existing laws, while counteracting the increasing influence of religious fundamentalism in political assemblies, legislations and in public life.

Each country in the Southern Mediterranean region has its own specificity; however the principle of conditionality should apply to them all. Dialogue with governments should not take place according to a ‘one-size-fits-all’: in some countries dialogue is difficult due to the nature of the governments in place. It should be tailor-made to local needs and challenges as well as the existing potentialities. Yet, dialogue should be at the national and multinational levels; these two levels should be dealt with in different ways but based clearly on the values of respect of the universal rights and women and men and gender equality as non-negotiable principles. Conditionality should be discussed not only with national governments but civil society as well.



- **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development includes economic development but is not limited to it. As explained above, holistic approach is needed to economic development, as women cannot be encouraged to enter labor market if their human rights are not respected in law and in practice. It is now universally recognized that sustainable development is tightly linked with gender equality development. Gender equality and antidiscrimination based on gender, should be crosscutting objectives especially in the field of economic, social and political development, as well as legislation. These values should be clearly articulated within all the ENP objectives and developed in each specific objective. In no case should the EU sign trade agreements if the States are violating human rights of women and men, following the Swedish example. Our ongoing gender analyses of the ENPs with the EU neighboring countries lead us to call the EU to link women's rights, trade and development, as well as to call the European Commission to commit itself to CEDAW and other international and regional women's rights instruments when conducting ENP. ENP can be an effective instrument for women's rights only if they support the implementation and empowerment of sustainable democracies and refuse any abuse of women's rights in the name of culture, tradition or religion. In this regard we don't call into question the proposed areas focus; we just wish that the women's rights, as universal human rights are promoted as a prior issue and recommend a gendered approach integrating the feminist analyses of women's rights organizations for all the issues, including youth problems.

- **Governance, rule of law, human rights and democracy**

When the EU speaks of promotion, development and consolidation of the "values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms", it should clearly specify the "human rights of women and men" and "the principles of gender equality" as well as the rule of law as a foundation for dialogue and cooperation with the neighbor countries.

When the EU defines that the support provided to each partner country shall be differentiated in form and amounts according to the partner country's commitment to reforms, mechanisms should be put in place to monitor progress in implementing these reforms. Such differentiation shall reflect the level of ambition of the country's partnership with the EU and its progress in building deep and sustainable democracy that includes the respect of the human rights of both women and men and gender equality. With reference to indicators, the ENP should use the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG) indicators and empowerment indicators, as SDG refers to gender equality as a goal and condition. The EU should then take these indicators to measure the sustainability of democracy and development.

- **Gender equality policy making, anti-militarization and disarmament, freedom of association, movement, engendering national budgets and statistics, encouraging engendered national economic programs**

The EU can support the Southern neighbors in achieving what the popular uprisings were calling for: democracy, freedom, dignity and social justice. The EU should base all the actions on the knowledge that there is no genuine democracy which does not take into account half of the population. Gender equality and women's rights should therefore be a priority area in the ENP and progress in that field should be taken as an indicator when evaluating the commitments of neighbor governments. The EU should involve women's rights organizations in the negotiation process with the authorities when deciding on the priorities and programs in



the framework of the new ENP. Furthermore, ENP should demand freedom of associations and envision means and support to engendering national budgets and statistics, encouraging engendered national economic programs. ENP should promote all international and regional women's rights instruments, notably the UfM process of strengthening the role of women in national gender equality policy making.

Moreover, there is a mutual interest in enhancing disarmament in the relations between the EU and the Neighborhood South since stability for the EU should be based on the political and economic stability as well as on justice. This should be addressed seriously and properly through the rights based approach. In this sense disarmament is an inseparable part of all policies and measures seeking towards stability and development.

All measures should enhance changing of attitudes and addressing cultural gender stereotypes. This requires not only a State political and legal intervention but also a broad awareness raising action addressing cultural gender stereotypes. The educational system and curricula are framed by patriarchal values and gender bias and contribute to reproducing these stereotypes. ENP should support policy making in particular in regards to education.

9. Mechanisms and tools

The EU has the right tools to base the ENP in the respect of universal values of gender equality and the human rights of women and men, notably, the UfM process on "Strengthening the role of women in the society" and the 2013 Paris Ministerial Conclusions. These conclusions are developed by the Euro-Med governments themselves and therefore cannot be considered as "imported by the West". Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI has been engaged in promoting and monitoring the implementation of these conclusions, mobilizing the women's movement and civil society and accumulating political will for their implementation.

Furthermore policies should avoid recreating hierarchies between nations, as this can be done with approaches that distinguish priorities between countries rather than openly engaging and adopting the particular requirements of a given region.

Greater de-centralization allows devolved authority from the EU Institutions to local governments and organizations. In addition to strengthened elements of trust, efficient exchange and transparency from both ends of communication with national governments, enables representation that puts gender equality at the forefront of neighborhood development. ENP should encourage broad adoption of temporary mechanisms to address deficiency in democratic governance as parity laws (as in Tunisia) and not less than 30% gender quotas – as stipulated in the BpA. Setting up of consultation mechanisms with civil society, including women's rights organizations is another tool.

Empirical research and statistical based analysis (among other forms of analyses) must become a cohesive form of observation when engendering national budgets; moreover these should begin to include gender based evaluation into international figures and data that ultimately affects annual reporting procedure. The EU should request for gender based statistics and reporting.

EU internal policy seemingly directs to the idea that human rights is a priority in policy making, nevertheless, this scarcely translates into EU foreign policy, a matter which must change. The contradictive nature of EU foreign policy has contributed to increased tensions in neighboring countries The EU should look to continue positive reports with countries of unstable political climate while simultaneously insisting on political reform



and engendering of constitutions that acknowledge, as in the interest of women's movement, principle of gender equality and non-discrimination based on gender.

The language of the structured dialogue (the consultations, the dialogue itself and the working groups) is not a technical issue and it should respect the different languages in the neighborhood south. In particular, all the documents need to be written in the three languages of the region: Arabic, French and English.

The approach of these consultations is so far widely perceived as based on the assumption that the problems are in the south and the solutions are in the north. That poverty is in the south and money is in the north, and that ignorance is in the south and knowledge is in the north. This is problematic especially knowing that we share similar problems of inequality, poverty, unemployment, education, health besides many others across the Mediterranean. Women's discrimination is also shared as the bases for it are same, while only the expressions are different and could be addressed with different tools.

In order to improve women's participation and access to power and resources, and following the recommendations from its Euro-Med Women's Rights conference June 2013, Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI advocates for:

- **Adopting gender equality laws** in all the countries of the Euro-Med region, ensuring institutionalizing of gender equality in the government policies and action plans to safeguard women's rights from regressive measures. (Croatia, France, Sweden example)
- **Forming of women's rights or gender equality committees** in the national assemblies and on governmental level mandated/in order to oversee the implementation of these laws and of women's rights.
- **Engendering the national budgets** and introducing gender based statistics in order to uncover the gender power relations and expose the discrimination thus raise awareness on the gaps.
- **Development of national economic programs** designed for women's better access to labor market and responsibilities in the economic sector.
- **Developing and legislating mechanisms** that ensure the fair distribution of work for women/men in the private and public sectors and development of social state services to allow women and men equal participation in economic and social life.

Conclusions

The current ENP's influence when promoting human rights and democracy in the partner countries missed consistency. Despite the resources currently under possession of the EU there has been a profoundly wide failure to successfully integrate effective policy; this has been more than evident when regarding the current climate of countries neighbouring Europe. There persists an archetypal fracture between the ENP objectives and the evidential results it has so far come to produce. **This poor translation of policy is what needs to be rectified if the ENP is to gain sufficient results.** The adjustments recommended aim to reconcile all the instruments required for a justly operative and coherent ENP, with emphasis on collaboration between both Europe and its neighbours.



While progressive politics exist, we are witnessing all over the world, the rise in religious and political extremisms that are often, in part, reactionary and linked to western foreign policy. This leads to the necessity to broadly redress Europe's relationship with the wider global community.

Challenging the perceptions already in place, and introducing more critical analysis of European legislation, policy and international relations have the potential to provide far more and far reaching results. It is not acceptable for Europe to hold indirect links with corrupt governments elsewhere, and yet take no responsibility for addressing the consequences of such governance.

For precisely the reasons mentioned, EU accountability should be challenged and the destabilising pattern demonstrated within the old ENP model must be reconfigured and evolved in a manner that incorporates the recommendations of those closest to civil society including women's rights CSOS, thus those close to the people ultimately affected. This means a **partnership based on equality, including gender equality, cooperation and mutual interest with a strong involvement of the civil society including women's rights organizations.**