



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI**

#### **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 is a policy network of women's rights organizations from the two shores of the Mediterranean and from Caucasus that advocates for gender equality and women's rights as a full part of democracy and citizenship, against militarism, war and occupation, for the right of peoples to self-determination.

The present set of recommendations is produced in the frame of the EU consultation process launched in March 2015 in order to contribute to the civil society input from gender equality perspective. They are 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. The full document can be accessed on [www.efi-ife.org](http://www.efi-ife.org)

While progressive policies exist, we are witnessing all over the world the rise in religious and political extremism, often linked to Western foreign presence or interventions. This rapid backwards development leads to the necessity to build new partnerships based on equality and mutual interest, with the values of democracy inclusive of gender equality, respect of universal human rights of women and men, and with a strong involvement of the civil society, including women's rights organizations.

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 an indicator when evaluating the commitments of neighbor governments.

#### **I. ENP, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

Sustainable development includes economic development but is not limited to it. Holistic approach is needed to economic development, as women cannot be encouraged to enter labor market if their human rights are not respected and they are discriminated in law and in practice. It is now universally recognized that sustainable development is tightly linked with gender equality development. Therefore ENP should incorporate, and request the incorporation of a gender equality perspective (gender mainstreaming) in all decision making by the actors who normally take part in decision making:

- Gender equality and antidiscrimination based on gender should be crosscutting objectives especially in the agreements made in the field of economic, social and political development, as well as legislation.
- The principle of respect and implementation of universal human rights of women and men and the value of gender equality should be clearly articulated within all the ENP objectives and developed in each specific objective.



- To this end, ENP should demonstrate absolute respect of international and regional women's rights instruments to address existing discrimination, including in legislation, while counteracting the increasing influence of religious fundamentalism in political assemblies, legislation and all spheres of public life. Among these instruments are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action (BpA), United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security and the subsequent ones, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Union for Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conclusions Paris 2013 and the ongoing process on Strengthening the women's rights and gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The European Commission should commit itself to CEDAW conducting ENP.
- Women's rights and development are linked and economic policies should not overrun the principle of human rights of women and gender equality. When encouraging economic programs, ENP should pay a special attention not to reproduce gender stereotypes in 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 be based on the full respect of the human rights of women and men and their economic, social and political rights.
- ENP should envision means and support to gender mainstreaming of national budgets and statistics as well as national economic action plans and strategies.
- In terms of language, when referring to different underrepresented categories, the ENP should take into account 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, and as such are structurally underrepresented and discriminated.

## **II. ENP AND MIGRATION**

The wars and the deteriorated economic and social situation have pressured people to run from misery and violence. 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. Therefore the ENP should:

- Raise and address the special needs of women in accessing labor market, social insurance, health insurance.
- Consider issues related to migration in the respect of international humanitarian law and from a human rights perspective. Promote measures to guarantee the right to free movement of all persons, the right to full citizenship of both women and men.
- Promote the experience and expertise of women's organizations of migrants as well as organizations supporting migrant women, to decision-makers at local, regional, national and European level and make use of them, in order to help shaping better migrant policy.
- Ask for the abrogation of bilateral agreements that keep migrant women subjected to the laws of their countries of origin. Victims of sexual abuse and torture should be given asylum to Europe.



- Ensure measures to welcome war refugees applying EU legislation and rescue operations in the high seas. Majority of refugees are women and children. They should be provided access to protection, social and psychosocial services.
- Women's 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. When discussing a multi-cultural society it should be clear that women's rights are universal human rights and cannot be framed by any specific culture or tradition.

### **III. ENP AND REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY**

Unprecedented deterioration is taking place the Euro-Med region and threatens severely peoples, their civil society and their right to freedom, justice and peace. 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. Women and women's rights defenders have been in the front line of all uprisings demanding freedom and democracy, with women's rights and gender equality as inseparable part of it. Therefore the ENP should:

- Give a greater support to partner 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. (see part I)
- Promote structural inclusion of women's rights defenders in a participatory and comprehensive peace process in the respect of UNSCR1325 as a condition to allow transitions towards democracy, enhancing respect of human rights of women and men alike.
- Most often the implementation of women's rights is delayed with the excuse of "stability". Therefore, the ENP should promote human security and economic and human development. Violence against women and gender-based violence are an inseparable part of the concept of human security.
- Regulations should be put in place to freeze partnership agreement with any EU partner who violates the human security of another partner.
- 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 with the recognition of an independent and sovereign Palestine State.

### **IV. ENP, GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW, RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY**

EU internal policy seemingly directs to the idea that human rights is a priority in policy making, nevertheless, it has been more challenging to translate this into EU foreign policy. Contradictions in EU policy have in times contributed to increased tensions in neighboring countries. Strengthening of trust can be enhanced by efficient exchange and transparency from both ends of communication with national governments, to enable greater



de-centralization and representation that puts democracy and gender equality at the forefront of neighborhood development.

By addressing the issues of equality between women and men and women's rights, in particular in a context that the new approach aims to 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 ENP provides the strategic policy framework for the EU relations with the neighbors and more effective supports to the demands of the civil society for gender sensitive governance and inclusive democracy and rule of law that is not discriminative based on gender. The ENP should strive to:

- Continue positive reports with countries of unstable political climate while simultaneously insisting on political reform and en-gendering of constitutions to acknowledge, as in the benefit of all women and the whole society and as demanded by the women's movement, the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination based on gender in the whole neighborhood.
- Conduct dialogue 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 human rights of women and men and gender equality as non-negotiable principles. Conditionality should be discussed not only with national governments but independent civil society as well.
- Clearly and always specify, when speaking of promotion, development and consolidation of the "values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, "human rights of women and men" and "the principles of gender equality" as well as the rule of law are a foundation for dialogue and cooperation with the neighbor countries.
- Use the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG) indicators and empowerment indicators, as SDG refers to gender equality as a goal and condition. The ENP should therefore take these indicators to measure the sustainability of democracy and development.
- 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 in order to promote change and abolish discriminative for women legislation.