



Gender Dynamics

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Quarterly trilingual newsletter of the Programme "Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the EuroMed region," funded by the European Union www.euromedgenderequality.org

Editorial

In Istanbul in November 2006, a Conference of Ministers was held concerning the status of women in the Euro-Mediterranean zone. This summit meeting represented a fundamental major impetus in the improvement of women's status on the two shores of the Mediterranean. On this occasion, the Ministers decided on steps that exceed, by far, the distribution of subsidies. The Istanbul Process is intended to be a political tool that has a positive effect on the movement towards equality de facto and by law between men and women in the Mediterranean region. Therefore it sets out multilateral measures for institutional support.

The conclusions and the recommendations of the Istanbul Conference are expressed in a clear political commitment. Two complementary tools resulted from this process. The Euromed Gender Equality programme (EGEP) is primarily aimed at the governmental actors via their institutions. It is directed towards the mechanisms which govern the questions of "gender" and "women". In parallel, another programme - Investment in human resources: gender equality - allocates subsidies to the civil society actors working to promote women's rights and equality. The combination of these activities with other initiatives supported by the European Commission gives our programme the maximum chance of success.

The concrete approach of EGEP involves moving from a political framework to targeted operational action plans with a precise schedule. The creation of a permanent space for dialogue between the governmental actors and those of civil society, including the media, is essential. The countries involved in the process fully accept the objectives of the programme and will coordinate their efforts at the regional level. The approach of the Euromed Gender Equality programme consists of documenting experience and giving visibility to good practices, in order to highlight the dynamics. The strong points will be developed and the fields to be improved will be identified. Relevant indicators will be determined in order to monitor and evaluate the results.

Thus, the voluntary initiative taken by the Istanbul Conference will act as a driver for stimulating unprecedented change based on universal values.

Judith Neisse

Message from the editorial team

In this second issue of "Gender Dynamics", we wanted to offer you a wide variety of information. Each of its readers will, we hope, draw inspiration from the action which will nourish their own practices. Thus of course we will cover, in an overall way, the progress in the Euromed Gender Equality regional programme (page...) as well as the process of analysing women's situation that has started in the nine participating countries. We want to go even further by focusing particularly on some of these countries.

In fact, the Euromed Gender Equality team went to Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco for introductory visits (page...). We formed many ties there that will contribute to the full achievement of the objectives of our programme. We also asked numerous questions there which will enable us to meet the needs of each participant in an appropriate manner.

On this occasion, in Cairo we met Dr Farkhonda Hassan, Secretary-General of the National Council for Women. You will read with interest her interview (page...) which shines a very clear spotlight on the advances in gender equality in Egypt. We also devote an article to the progress made in the full application of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the Maghreb countries (page...). In parallel, we report on the progress of the changes in women's status in Europe, via the interim report on the "Roadmap for equality between women and men over the period 2006-2010" (page...).

In this issue you will also find an abundance of brief news items which will inform you about the various initiatives that concern gender equality: publications, Internet sites, contests, events (including Women's Day on March 8, page...).

In this second edition, we thus invite you to discover the fabulous dynamic launched in favour of equality in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Happy reading!
The Editors

Progress in the programme

Consolidating achievements

Developed within the framework of the Ministerial Conclusions of Istanbul, the regional Euromed Gender Equality (EGEP) programme is a tool in the hands of the government agencies for promoting equality between men and women. It owes its utility to the rigour of its approach.

In order to base its action on solid foundations, the first stage of the process that it

starts up consists of an analysis of the situation in the nine countries covered by the programme. This analysis aims to offer an overall vision of the status of women in each country, and then at the regional level. It focuses more specifically on the extent of women's participation in decision-making, both in the private sphere (and family) and in the public sphere ●●●

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●●● The analytical reading that the Euromed Gender Equality programme offers is based both on the Conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean ministers from this meeting in Istanbul and on a fundamental text of the UN, signed with



reservations by the member states: the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Particular attention is paid to violence based on gender. The research and investigations carried out in the past in the participating countries are used as a reference framework for the collection of information. The various speakers in the field as well as the institutional actors are fully involved in the process of considering implementation. A national workshop

for validating results has been organised in order to propose, in each country, a platform of priorities and recommendations, at least the most important of which will be dealt with within the framework of the Euromed Gender Equality programme.

The investigations and analyses undertaken, both on the qualitative and the quantitative level, all converge towards the same objectives: to consolidate the efforts made previously while defining new niches of action. This is why, conscious that the actions undertaken within the framework of the national and regional policies seem to have borne fruit, the EGEP programme supports a participatory approach,

which represents a complementary objective in itself: to amplify the dynamic progress already existing in the region.

From the results of the analysis, the programme, in cooperation with its national partners, intends to formulate proposals for improvement of approaches and working methods as well as legislation for each country. This in particular concerns drawing up as exhaustive an inventory as possible in order to act on two levels: to open up channels for targeted actions, and to identify possible improvements within the existing legislative and institutional frameworks.

At the regional level, the Euromed Gender Equality programme also sets out to develop a platform of common priorities and to propose a new strategic vision. Thus, actions will be able to develop in an interdependent way, in order to make a concerted advance towards the full realisation of the Istanbul recommendations and the full implementation of the CEDAW●



New Dynamics

In the Maghreb, equality happens through the CEDAW

In the Maghreb countries, 2008 saw a particular dynamic around the UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW consists of thirty clauses and requires the member states to guarantee, on the basis of gender equality, access to economic, social, cultural and civil rights to women.

The latest action to date is that which President Abdelaziz Bouteflika took by signing a presidential decree on 31 December 2008, bearing on lifting the reservation issued by the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria relating to article 9-2 of the Convention, which stipulates that "the member states grant women rights equal to those of men with regard to the nationality of their children".

On the occasion of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Morocco has, for its part, consecrate one of the basic rights proclaimed by it.

In a message addressed to the special meeting of the advisory council on human rights, the Moroccan sovereign decided that the Kingdom would lift the reservations to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women issued by Morocco, by considering them null and void "because of the advanced legislation that has been adopted by our country".

Six months earlier, through its ratification of the optional Protocol of the CEDAW, Tunisia recognised the competences of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. This committee examines complaints made by private individuals or groups who claim they are victims of a violation, committed by the state, of one of the rights stipulated in the Convention●

Publication Violence: a training manual in Arabic



The Center for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR) has just published a training manual focusing on violence against women. Prepared by Palestinian, Egyptian, Moroccan, Jordanian, Tunisian and Lebanese experts, this work aims to create a reference basis for training in the subject.

The manual targets several groups of professionals, such as those of listening centres, the health sector as well as judges, journalists, police officers and various civil society actors. It includes seven modules dealing with training methods, international and regional conventions and mechanisms, definitions relating to violence, listening techniques, communication and the development of partnerships, case documentation and, finally, a journalistic treatment of the question of violence.

In addition, on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8, CAWTAR published a "poster of posters" produced by the governmental and non-governmental institutions within the context of the campaigns they have carried out for combating violence... The one hundred and ten posters collected by CAWTAR in ten Arab countries will be the subject of a catalogue which will present the experience and initiatives in the field●

Teamwork, a team at work

Judith Neisse, new team leader



Since January 2009, Judith Neisse has been the new director of the Euromed Gender Equality programme.

Judith Neisse graduated in the languages and civilisations of the Arab and Moslem world (M. A.). She has been interested in women's status since the beginning of her career.

Hence she co-founded, in 1995, the NGO Action in the Mediterranean. AIM took on the mission of promoting the status of women in the Mediterranean region. It is working on the dialogue between women in areas affected by conflict.

From 1994 to 1997, our team leader was already an expert attached to the European Commission. Within the Directorate-General for External Affairs, Judith Neisse was in charge of the creation of a new regional programme in the Mediterranean. This programme focuses on cooperation between the European Union and its partners of the South and East Mediterranean in the area of the cultural heritage.

In 1998, Judith Neisse created MEDIANA, a consultancy bureau specialising in community programmes relating to education, equal opportunities, culture, new technologies and international cooperation. Thus, Judith Neisse has worked on "gender" questions in the Mediterranean within the framework of projects financed by the European Union, the Belgian Development Cooperation Agency (CTB), the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and UNDP.

Euromed on the Net

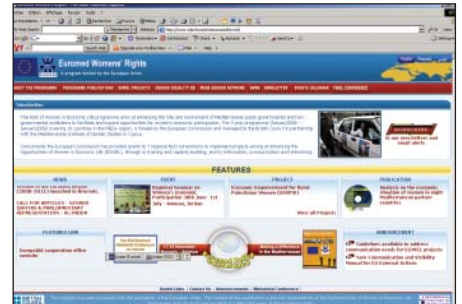
www.euromedgenderequality.org

The regional Euromed Gender Equality programme has just completed its baptism on the Net. A dual purpose characterises its Web site. euromedgenderequality.org gives information about the programme, its objectives, its achievements and its partners, of course. Its ambition, however, is to grow in order to establish itself as a leading reference for questions concerning equality between men and women.

Women on the Web

www.amanjordan.org/cedaw/

CEDAW and the Arab World



Since 1998, the Amanjordan site devoted to CEDAW has been one of the principal tools of the International Institute for the Solidarity of Women. Hosted in Jordan and intended for the Arabic-speaking world, it aims to publicise the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. It shines the spotlight on the general recommendations adopted by the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women which was founded after the examination of the reports and the information received from the member states. Eleven reports from Arab countries as well as a significant number of studies and research on the question can be downloaded. On the site you will also find a list of countries that have ratified the Convention as well as the reservations issued by the Arab countries. The guidelines for the establishment of the CEDAW procedure are indicated: internal regulations relating to the meetings of the member states and the optional protocol, as well as the principal orientations for the drafting of reports.

The site also includes headings reserved for the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. You can read about its governance, its mode of operation and a list of its members. Information concerning the activities of the government agencies and non-governmental organisations appears on the home page. A "resources" section gives access to numerous conventions and declarations concerning women's rights. You will also find there the CEDAW and the optional protocol, the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict (1974), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1994) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967).



What's new?

Introductory visits

The regional Euromed Gender Equality programme is based on the full participation of each participating state. Accordingly, each partner adopts the objectives of the Istanbul Process and cooperates regularly with the people in charge of the project.

This is why the members of the team visited their interlocutors in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon and Jordan. Visits to the other participating countries are also planned. Thus the EGEP programme was introduced in the governmental institutions, civil society organisations and international organisations concerned. Journalists and communication professionals and the media were also approached.

In each of these countries, numerous exchanges between the various parties enabled support for the programme and reinforced the determination of each person to work towards gender equality. The four countries visited have already noted subsequent advances in the fields treated by Euromed Gender Equality on which the programme will be able to rely in order to intensify the efforts.

As part of the fight against violence against women, for example, these countries have already conducted or started national surveys. Some have national strategies for combating violence, others are finalising specific action plans in areas such as the fight against female genital mutilation. Various services have been created, such as receiving units for women and children who are victims of violence within the emergency services of hospitals, and centres for psychological counselling and legal assistance. The establishment of shelters for battered women and telephone help lines is also noted. Mediation services also intervene in cases of violation of women's rights. Constant efforts have also been made regarding legislative changes ●

News in brief

Arab action against violence

An Arab Action plan for protection against violence as well as an Arab Network for the protection of the family against violence was born in Jordan, during the second Arab Conference on Family Protection from Family Violence that was held on 16 and 17 February. Placed under the high patronage of her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdallah, the conference was organised by the National Council for the Family in cooperation with the Ministry for Social Development and a significant number of national, regional and international organisations●

www.ncfa.org.jo

Women do business

On the occasion of the General Assembly of the National Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs (CNFCE) which was held in Tunis on 15 January, a trophy award ceremony took place. Two women won awards.



The trophy for "Female Entrepreneur of the year 2008" was presented by the President of the Tunisian Union of industry, trade and crafts to Sana Fathallah Ghenima de Sanibel Medet for her involvement in several fields including those of childhood, culture and eco-

logy. CNFCE stressed the importance of sales turnover in the exports of Sanibel Medet, as well as the management-to-staff ratio in the company.

The trophy for "Artisan of the year" was presented to Hayet Ben Ahmed from Dar Tataouine (Southern Tunisia) in recognition of her establishment in her region, for her contribution to the export of Tunisian craft products and especially for her ability to create employment for other women●

<http://www.cnfce.org.tn>

Youth, development and equality

Equality of the sexes is one of the topics considered for the youth and development prize 2009, intended for European teenagers from the ages of 16 to 18. Contributions must include a short message and a poster or a video in one of the twenty-three official languages of the European Union. Twenty-seven prize winners and their teachers will be rewarded with a trip to Africa. They will visit places where cooperation and development projects are being carried out.

The "European Schoolnet" organisation, which launched this contest, has set 31 May 2009 as the deadline for receiving contributions●

<http://www.dyp2008.org>

The floor is to...

Dr Farkhonda Hassan

"The Istanbul Conference is a major impetus for equality"



We met Dr Farkhonda Hassan, Secretary-general of the National Women's Council (CNF) as part of the introductory visit to the Euromed Gender Equality programme in Egypt. She granted us an interview that explains, from the inside, the situation of Egyptian women and the efforts made to give them the place they deserve in society.

Today Egypt is experiencing a new dynamic in the field of gender equality. What was the role of your institution in this process ?

The National Women's Council was created in 2000 by virtue of a presidential decree. It has two main functions: to develop a national draft plan for promoting women and solving the problems they face; to give advice on the laws and resolutions relating to women and propose laws and resolutions in order to promote the status of women.

Under the terms of these assignments, the Council has acquired several mechanisms whose principal mission is to suggest new laws and to re-examine others, including the Code which governs the personal status of women. Among these mechanisms is the legislative Commission, which is one of the standing committees of the Council. Its mission is to discuss and propose all the legislative provisions necessary to promote the status of women and to strengthen their autonomy.

The Council also organises congresses, conferences, workshops and panel sessions. Their goal is to establish a constructive dialog between the various parties on subjects relating to women and, in particular, to propose new draft legislation and to revise the laws in force.

In order to achieve its goals, the Council has also created an institutional mechanism, called the "Office for Women's Complaints". This office is responsible for monitoring and examining the problems that women face in all fields in all the governorates of the Republic. This bureau has the task of identifying in the field the problems which prevent the effective participation of women in the development process, and dealing with them. The ultimate objec-

tive is to support women, to enable them to enjoy the full extent of their rights and to support their contribution to development work.

The Legislative Commission of the Council carries out the examination of the legal texts relating to women, including in particular the Code of personal status, in relation to the reports and studies submitted by the Office for Women's Complaints. These studies produce data and statistics that make it possible to draw up the list of problems of a general nature. The quasi-majority of the requests are concerned with the Code of personal status, and relate in particular to alimony in the event of divorce. All of these studies have made it possible to become aware of the nature of the problems and to define the scope of the means for addressing them.

Since its creation, the Council has actively contributed to the revision of many laws in force and proposed new draft legislation relating in particular to personal status. Seven laws have been promulgated: one law relating to the arrest of any person who refuses to pay alimony; the cancellation of a decision by the Ministry of the Interior relating to travel by the wife, which was subject to authorisation by her husband; one law relating to women working. The establishment of family tribunals, as well as the creation of the family insurance fund, the law relating to the granting of Egyptian nationality to the children of an Egyptian mother, a law relating to income tax and another relating to social security - under the terms of which the husband can benefit from his wife's retirement pension in the event of her death -, have also benefited from the involvement of the Council.

Currently, the Council is contributing to the revision of three laws: one law relating to provisions relating to the recourse to justice



in the field of personal status; another bearing on the establishment of the family tribunals, and a third relating to the family insurance fund.

The Council is also in the process of developing a series of studies of violence against women in Egypt...

The National Women's Council has a particular interest in the phenomenon of violence against women. Numerous studies are under development. They deal with multiple questions: the analysis of the phenomenon of violence against women from a legal point of view (study of the laws, conventions and procedures); the relation between autonomy and family violence; physical violence and moral coercion (analytical study of the medical and demographic census); the media in relation to violence against women. A survey into violence against women within the family and in public life is also being carried out on a sample of citizens in seven provinces ●●●

●●● How do you hope to use the results of these studies?

The results of these studies will be used to provide indicators and to develop strategies for dealing with violence against women. The objective is to further raise awareness of the need to put an end to this phenomenon. The results will be also used to inaugurate mechanisms for cooperation between the government and civil society in order to give all the support and all the assistance necessary for women who are victims of violence. This is also a matter of guaranteeing these people decent housing and medical services, and providing them with counselling, including legal advice. These studies also form the foundation for developing education programmes for the female leaders in rural areas and medical assistants. On the one hand they will provide various forms of assistance to women who are the victims of violence and, on the other hand, they will make it possible to examine laws with a view to their revision, particularly the law on the criminal procedures and the penal code. Sentencing to the maximum penalty in the case of crimes where women are subjected to specific forms of violence is being considered.

In your opinion, what is the added value brought by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference held in Istanbul on “strengthening the role of women in society”?

The Euro-Mediterranean conference was, clearly, a major impetus for the efforts in favour of promoting women and equality between men and women, with the ultimate objective of making it possible for woman to occupy the place they deserve in all fields.

This conference also stressed the incontestable necessity of inaugurating a partnership between the governmental parties and civil society. It is in particular imperative to collect information from credible sources concerning women’s status and to review the data from the studies available to the Euro-Mediterranean network.

With regard to the added value that the Euro-Mediterranean Conference can bring in future, it is important to find the financing needed to support joint action. Then countries will be able to carry out their own activities and implement their own programmes concerning the promotion of women●

Equality around the world

Europe: The interim roadmap for equality between women and men

At the beginning of January 2009 the European Commission adopted an interim progress report on the “Roadmap for equality between women and men over the period 2006-2010”. Adopted on 1 March 2006, this roadmap proposes six priorities in order to stimulate gender equality in Europe: arriving at equal economic independence for women and men; reconciling private life and work; supporting the participation of women and men in decision-making on an equal footing; eradicating any form of violence based on gender, including trafficking in human beings; eliminating stereotypes related to gender; promoting equality in cooperation and development policies. The roadmap also stipulates the improvement of governance by strengthening instruments that promote equality.

The interim report measures the progress achieved in these fields with supporting figures. Particular attention is given to immigrant women “who represent the majority of the migrant population in the Union”, as well as the promotion of equality between the sexes outside the European Union.

Acknowledging the significant progress accomplished in nearly all the priority areas mentioned by the roadmap, the report concludes nevertheless that the programmes and the policies of the Commission do not make sufficient allowance for the difference in impact of the policies on men and women. The report consequently makes a recommendation intended for policy makers. This concerns increasing the awareness of the social and political stakes relating to gender equality●

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=422&langId=fr>

The Partners

Egypt : The National Women’s Council, a major development actor

Among the many organisations charged with promoting the status of women in Egypt, the National Women’s Council, chaired by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, occupies a prime position. Dr Farkhonda Hassan, whose interview you can read here, is its Secretary-General.

The Council considers women to be major actors of national development. It operates in cooperation with all the institutions concerned, whether governmental or not.

The Council develops strategies which aim to promote the role of women, to support their integration within society and to improve their living conditions. It tries to increase the scale of female participation in the socio-economic development process in Egypt. It works on the integration of women in the labour market, on strengthening their prerogatives in the economic domains, in education, health and information. It also addresses the fate of women living in rural areas, etc.

The National Women’s Council played a fundamental part in the creation of the Arab Women Organisation (OFA) which strives to support and defend the cause of women, in the Arab world and elsewhere●

Events

Women's Day

March 8: an unusual Sunday

In 1791 the first Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen came into being, written by Marie Gouze, called Olympe de Gouges, one of the French feminist pioneers. Its first article stipulated: "Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common utility". Women in Europe and Russia then carried the torch: in 1920, Lenin consecrated March 8 as the Day of Women's Rights. The general assembly of the United Nations made this date official in 1977. Since then, the battle continues, and voices continue to be raised for equal rights and opportunities.

March 8th celebrated by the media

The European Franco-German cultural television channel ARTE developed a special programme for the occasion of the celebration of International Women's Day. Six news documentaries and two special evenings provided the programming from Tuesday 3rd to Sunday 8th March. The documentary "Dati the ambitious" kicked off the series. It covers the itinerary of a girl from the poor suburbs of Paris to the Ministry of Justice. This programming ended with "The moon inside them, a secret kept too well". This documentary, through the journey of a thirty-year old Slovak woman, led the viewers to wonder about femininity and women's place in society. The series of broadcasts concentrated on two themes: "are women politicians like the others?" and "being a woman".

For its part, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, which includes more than four thousand community radio stations in more than one hundred fifteen countries, chose to devote its time to women for a period of 24 hours. All the programmes were written and produced by women. They gave a platform to other women from the four corners of the world. Each one made her voice heard, spoke of her hopes, dreams, the challenges with which she is confronted, of the battles in which she is engaged.

Sporting days

The "Parisienne" crossed its thirteenth finishing line this year, with the participation of thousands of women aged from 7 to 77 years. This race aims to honour women while symbolically denouncing the machismo of the sporting media. Patrick Aknin, who created it, wanted to



organise a women's race without the obligations of competition. Symbolic registration fees for the training were collected

for the benefit of the Foundation for Medical Research in order to finance a research project concerning breast cancer.

In Switzerland, the tennis ball flew over the country to move towards the four corners of the world, carrying the trophy of friendship. The Trophy for this year was devoted to the "celebration of our sporting women". Organised by



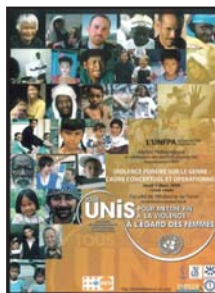
with the cooperation of the United Nations, this year the trophy supported the third objective of the millennium: to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

the International Working Group for Women and Sport, the women's working group from the International Table Tennis Federation and

women". A jury made up of children from the twenty-seven Member States of the European Union will select two drawings from each region to share a prize of one hundred euros for each area.

The winning drawings will grace an exhibition that will be inaugurated in autumn 2009. They will also be the subject of a publication which will be distributed to the schools of the participating countries and those of the European Union.

Violence and public health



Members of the regional Euromed Gender Equality programme took part on 5 March in the educational workshop organised by the United Nations Population Fund. Three hundred people gathered around the theme

"GBV conceptual and operational framework". The workshop took place at the Faculty of Medicine in Tunis. In addition to people representing national and international organisations interested in the question of violence, students and professors of the faculty participated.

Since the principal theme of the workshop was gender-based violence, our programme was able to publicise its approach on the subject, its objectives, its activities and its future strategies. A clarification of the concepts as well as a debate on the consequences of violence against women in the fields of health and human rights enriched everyone's approach.

Children of the World, to your paints



On 8 March, and for the third consecutive year, the European Commission launched a drawing contest intended for children aged from eight to ten years from third countries. The theme: "Equality between men and

DECLARATION DES DROITS DE LA FEMME ET DE LA CITOYENNE.
"A décrire par l'Assemblée nationale dans ses dernières séances ou dans celle de la prochaine législature."

FRANÇOISE

Les mânes, les filles, les sœurs, représentantes de la nation, demandent d'être constituées en assemblée nationale. Considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de la femme, sont les seuls causes des maux publics et de la corruption des gouvernements, ont résolu d'exposer dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de la femme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs, afin que les actes du pouvoir des femmes, et ceux du pouvoir des hommes puissent être à chaque instant comparés avec le but de toute institution politique, et en soient plus respectés, afin que les réclamations des citoyennes, fondées désormais sur des principes simples et incontestables, tournent toujours au maintien de la constitution, des hommes moraux, et au bonheur de tous.
En conséquence, le acte impérial en faveur comme en courage, dans les assemblées nationales, reconnait et déclare, en présence

Didactic boards

With the support of the European Union, the Charleroi regional integration centre based in Belgium has placed at the disposal of the public and NGOs, on the occasion of International Women's Day, one hundred Didactic boards dealing with the situation of women from the 19th to the 21st century. The panels are designed around seven principal focal points. The historical context of International Women's Day, data about the development of women's right and others on discrimination against women, legislative texts, definitions, demographic statistics and humorous illustrations likely to arouse debate can be seen there.



"Equal pay for equal work"

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the European Commission has launched a campaign devoted to differences in pay between men and women. A didactic toolbox, a web site in twenty-two languages, a video press release and a video clip have been produced. The campaign is in line with the efforts being made by the European Commission to eliminate wage differences between women and men, one of the major concerns proposed in "the roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010)".



The voice of the press

Appearing in "Morocco Today" (Aujourd'hui le Maroc), 2 January 2009

Morocco has made unprecedented progress concerning human rights. The lifting of the reservations to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women and the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities illustrate this.

Morocco is on the right road to the rule of law. Several advances have been made concerning human rights. The lifting by the Kingdom of the reservations to the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDEF) illustrates this advance. The decision was announced by King Mohammed VI in a message addressed to the Moroccan advisory council on human rights (CCDH) on the occasion of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In his message, the king stressed that the reservations had become "null and void" in view of the "advanced" legislation adopted by Morocco. This decision, which had been awaited for several years, earned the approval of civil society. The women's movement had demanded on several occasions that the authorities take the steps necessary to make this convention apply to Morocco.

Even the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had called upon Morocco "to integrate the principle of equality between women and men in the constitution or other laws, and to promulgate and apply an overall law on the equality of the sexes which is also constraining for the public sector and the private sector and to raise women's awareness of their rights under the terms of this legislation". Let us recall that like many Islamic countries, Morocco had issued reservations to articles 2, 9, 15 and 16 judged to be incompatible with Sharia and the constitution. The lifting of the reservations will open the way to new reforms. But how far will Morocco be able to go in lifting its reservations, and thus in introducing equality between men and women insofar as the convention of the United Nations excludes any form of discrimination? The government will now have to consider the examination of concrete ways of lifting the reservations. Another high point this year was the ratification by Morocco of the International



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the safeguarding of their dignity. This decision constitutes a major step for these people, who have been marginalised for a long time and relegated to second place in society. This convention will thus contribute to the consolidation and the establishment of the basic rights of these people with respect to the right to education, health, to social services and medical cover. The consolidation of the rights of people with disabilities should allow a better integration of this segment of the population. The ratification by Morocco of this convention will guarantee people with disabled status in Morocco dignified and equitable living conditions and will allow them to realise their potential and to enjoy their intrinsic rights. The question of persons with disabilities has experienced unprecedented international dynamism in recent years. Morocco signed this International Convention in March 2007.

Leila Zerrouk

Contacts and subscription:

If you would like to subscribe to our newsletter or receive more information about the regional Euromed Gender Equality programme,

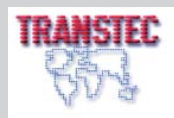
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