

The People Behind the Projects

EuroMed Gender Equality > Interview with Judith Neisse

EU-funded Programme analyzes women's situation in the Mediterranean



■ Judith Neisse – team leader

“Each government holds legal and political responsibility towards the principle of equality between all citizens: human rights are women's rights too”, says **Judith Neisse** director of the EU-funded programme “Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the EuroMed Region”.

In an interview with Eurojar, a media project funded by the EU's Regional Information and Communication Programme, she says they are currently working with many Mediterranean Partner Countries “to analyze the situation of women in each of them and to lead studies about gender-based violence, according to common criteria and methodologies.” Later on, she says, action plans will be drawn up at a national and a regional level.

Text Eurojar project

Q: *To whom falls the task of fighting for gender equality?*

Judith Neisse: In everyday life, equality begins in the private sphere. Equitable sharing of responsibilities is defined within the couple and the family, with a line of conduct on the basis of equal rights and equal obligations beyond individual differences. However, love and mutual respect are not sufficient. Sometimes the influences of the past and traditions have repercussion on mentalities. It is thus the role of public institutions and civil society to carry on. Each government holds legal and political responsibility towards the principle of equality between all citizens: human rights are women's rights too.

Q: *Do Southern Mediterranean women show reluctance or apprehension regarding projects carried out to improve their situation?*

Just like some men, some women are affected by the mentality prevailing in their country. Others express a desire for improving their conditions and obtaining entire emancipation, in spite of their social background. They all have the right to equality. This is why the adoption of international rules and universal values of equality is an essential issue. Citizenship education and governments' volunteer approach will help destroying psychological fences.

This is a series of interviews with leaders of projects funded by the EU's Regional Programme, prepared by the ENPI Info Centre.
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Q: What activities are implemented by the Euromed Gender Equality programme?

The programme has an atypical approach. It is addressed to state actors in charge of equality policies. It offers an accompaniment in the form of expertise services, studies, training sessions and capacities reinforcement so that they can be able to improve the situation in their country and then in their region, as they know it better. The programme does not allocate grants for short-term projects, like other initiatives do. We work on social changes, and this takes time. Currently, we are collaborating with many countries to analyze the situation of women in each of them and to lead studies about gender-based violence, according to common criteria and methodologies. Later on, action plans will be drawn up at a national and a regional level.

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Q: How is it possible to answer the needs of NGOs, especially those working to promote women's rights?

Our programme works with public entities. However, there is another Euromed regional programme (Investing in People – Euromed Gender Equality) that allocates grants to civil society actors for the same purposes.

Q: Are the reasons behind violence against women in this region cultural, social or religious?

Gender-based violence is an international and a global phenomenon. On one hand, it is related to historical factors (tradition and culture). On another hand, only a legal and an economic autonomy could help women escape violence. With education and better legislation, their struggle will be facilitated.

Q: Do you think gender equality is still relevant today?

The world equality infers that equal treatment is essential before the law. It also leads to a mutual respect. Such perception excludes privileges and discriminations towards one group or another.

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Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the EuroMed Region

Supports gender equality and the full implementation of CEDAW, increases knowledge on gender-based violence and backs the follow up to the Istanbul Ministerial Conference on Gender

www.euromedgenderequality.org

Participating countries

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia

Objectives

Aims at promoting three main priorities: support to the current dynamics that favour gender equality and promote women's rights, and to the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and related instruments; contribution to increased knowledge of gender-based violence and support to actions addressing its occurrence and its root causes; backs the follow-up of the conclusions and the action framework of the Istanbul Ministerial conference on "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society".

Timeframe

2008-2011

Find out more

ENPI Info Centre Gender page > <http://www.enpi-info.eu/themed.php?subject=12>

Enhancing Equality between Men and Women in the EuroMed Region project fiche

http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=241&id_type=10

Eurojar project > <http://eurojar.org/en/euromed-articles>

Budget

€4.5 million

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