

# Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship in the EUROMED Region

Opinion  
of the  
European Economic and Social Committee

- The EESC believes that women's rights are not to be treated as an isolated issue separate from women's role in economic development.
- Commitment by all social partners to acknowledge the relationship between human rights, democracy, development and women's rights is crucial.
- Eliminating obstacles to women's empowerment, resulting from traditional, cultural and family laws should be given priority.

# The EESC reiterates that

- Inter-ministerial cooperation,
- the involvement of other stakeholders such as
  - representatives of financial institutions,
  - implementing agencies,
  - representatives of business communities,
  - experts and donors
- the exchange of views on priority areas and facilitating the transfer of existing businesses to women, will produce more effective results in promoting women's entrepreneurship.

# The Role of Women's Entrepreneurship

The EESC reaffirms its belief that the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in the Euro-Mediterranean region plays a significant role in creating an active and dynamic economy geared for globalisation.

# The EESC recommends a Platform

- for better communicating the findings to policy makers and
- for the collection and dissemination of material to micro, small and medium enterprises in the Euro-Med region in areas in which female entrepreneurs encounter particular difficulties,
- support and development of programmes for women entrepreneurs,
- development of mechanisms regarding the legal status of co-preneurs, assisting spouses and their social protection,
- action to strengthen the social security and legal status of women developing their own business

# Recommendations for mechanisms specific to Female Entrepreneurship in the Euromed region

*Policies should be set out in an Action Plan, which has clear time frames and evaluation procedures, and should include:*

- Capacity Building mechanisms, and support schemes.
- Investment into social infrastructure and services.
- Defining traditional entrepreneurial activity, SMEs and individual self employment.
- The opening up of public contracts to SMEs.
- An equal footing for male owned and female owned businesses of all sizes.

# Recommendations (2)

- An equal legal system permitting women to sign documents and own property.
- Training for women who run or own businesses, including advice on legal and fiscal matters.
- The creation of businesses by migrant women and minority groups.
- Raising credit ceilings need to encourage micro and small enterprises to expand and invest in their business
- Formation of 'mutual guarantee companies',
- Greater efficiency of the micro-credit sector, and commercial banks providing adequate and realistic conditions for loans.

# Recommendations (2)

- Further involvement of women in the decision making process at all levels, government, local authorities, and the judiciary.
- Specific objectives for gender equality in employment policies, with qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Small cooperatives to lend support to businesswomen.
- Giving visibility and strengthening small traditional business activities run by women
- Strengthening existing women entrepreneurs to take the economic initiative in the development of non-traditional business activities

# Recommendations (3)

- Organising marketing and promotion exhibitions in the region and in EU member states
- Formal jobs in the provision of childcare facilities
- Support and information services on self-employment to women ease the pressures of immigration
- Identifying and evaluating national measures relating to start-ups,
- Monitoring progress in the Euro-Med partner countries

# Women and the Agricultural Sector

- The contribution of women is largest in the agricultural sector.
- In rural areas where a high proportion of women are illiterate or have no more than a primary education, access to training resources is very limited
- The need for integrated programmes, combining personal empowerment, vocational training and training in entrepreneurship and basic business skills

# Entrepreneurship and Information and Communication Technology

- Investment in infrastructure and strategies to improve access to new ICT
- Providing easier access to ICT facilities and training to women starting their own business will facilitate marketing, bringing goods to the consumer through the proper channels of distribution as ICT could also be a vehicle for better marketing.
- Special attention should be given to the influence of mass media, particularly TV, on entrepreneurship and women

# The Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise

- One of the key principles is to build an entrepreneurial society in the Euro-Med region
- to address both young people and adults through the education system at all levels in a lifelong learning perspective.
- However, it makes no specific reference to address the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs.
- The EESC recommends that women are targeted in the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise

# The Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Enterprise (2)

- The Euro-Mediterranean Industrial Cooperation 2007-2008 Work Programme strengthens measures for more effective implementation.
- However, it does not specifically target the promotion of women entrepreneurship.
- In implementing the Charter, promoting entrepreneurship for women was neither a key principle nor one of the objectives.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

*The EESC welcomes:*

- The full commitment of the European Union and Mediterranean States to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in line with the European Commission's Five Year Work Programme,
- That particularly supports the proposals on developing policies to promote the empowerment of women.
- To this end, it suggests that specific funds be allocated to those Euro-Mediterranean countries which undertake positive action aiming to effectively improve the legal status of women.

# Conclusions and Recommendations (2)

The review mechanisms of the Conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on "*Strengthening the Role of Women in Society*" ensure that the development of women entrepreneurship is closely monitored and evaluated, and that measures are taken to enhance its development.

# Conclusions and Recommendations (3)

*The EESC urges that:*

- the ENP includes specific measures and targets to address the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in the National Action Plans, and
- more funds are allocated to the development of women entrepreneurship.

# Conclusions and Recommendations (4)

*The EESC urges the Euromed Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA):*

- to propose policies to strengthen current business activities carried out by women and
- to promote forward-looking sustainable initiatives in the face of global competition.

*The EESC strongly urges the Euro-Med Permanent University Forum launched in Tampere:*

- to give priority to the gender dimension of its initiatives in particular in the area of entrepreneurship.

# Conclusions and Recommendations (5)

- Efforts should be made to ensure that a balanced number of young women and men benefit from the Euro-Mediterranean programmes targeting young people, both in terms of participants as well as leaders.
- The EESC recommends that in addressing future challenges facing female entrepreneurs, further research is conducted to identify the specific needs within each country.

# The role of Civil Society

- To empower women and encouraging their participation and representation in the public arena, and in promoting women's business activities.
- To create private-public partnerships NGOs and socio-professional organisations that can stimulate economic growth effectively.
- To train and accredit so as to eradicate the gender gap in education.

# The role of the EESC

The EESC has an important role to play in:

- securing the participation of civil society in the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean policy regarding the integration of women in the economic and social life.

# The role of the EESC (2)

*The EESC also supports the Ministers' recognition of the importance of:*

- fostering the role of civil society,
- enhancing its capability through
- improving interaction with government and parliament contacts between:
  - civil society organisations,
  - women's organisations,
  - youth,
  - trade unions,
  - business and professional associations,
- improving cooperation between national, regional and local administrations

***Our commitment to meet  
the challenges of today.....  
for a better future!***