

Document of intention for the setting up of a network of Mediterranean and Balkans women and for the adoption of best practices within the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men as an improvement of cultural differences and gender cultures

The women revolution has marked this closing century. It managed to clearly express the human and universalistic foundation of its causes and to give women a self-awareness, the awareness of their own freedom and mastery of which we can find a clear example in women living under the oppression of wars, poverty and totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless such an awareness meets obstacles every day: the hostility towards the exercise of personal freedom, the daily exertion to transform gender relations within the public and private framework.

That is what is shared by women from all over the world; still a further load rests on some of them: the burden of poverty, discrimination and slavery denies them fundamental rights in so many countries in the world.

At the same time the globalization and the existing migration processes led to a living together that made us understand the inter-dependence which joins Mediterranean and European women together, it induces to face up to common problems and to the various aspects of women social weakness in the various fields. At the same time, the common awareness about women value and common projects for transformation - apart from one's own culture of origin - are joining elements which open the way to a comparison between our many cultures.

Different cultures cannot absolutely justify any denial or limitation to women rights.

In Italy the experiences which Regions, Provinces and the various Associations have been experiencing for the past few years in the field of co-operation with and for women started some extremely useful realisations and a very interesting relation.

We wish to point out the need for the 1987 reforming Law n. 48 - regarding the Italian co-operation to the development - to strengthen the decentralized co-operation by giving Regions, Towns and Local Authorities a more active role.

We also wish to confirm that it is necessary to adopt the equal dignity among gender equality, to bring out cultural differences and to promote women cultures as a clear achievement of the development and, consequently, of the policies for public assistance and co-operation, which is the content of the recent "Guide lines for the appreciation of women role and the promotion of a gender view within the public assistance to the Italian development", adopted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The outcomes of the Beijing World Conference on Women were taken by the Region Emilia-Romagna in their deliberation on the undertaking of "Actions aimed at the promotion of the assignment of powers and responsibilities to women, at recognising and assuring personal freedom of choice and social quality to women and men"; such results represent a political direction for the Local Authorities of Emilia-Romagna and for those who are undersigning the present document of intention with reference to the following objectives:

- acquisition of powers and responsibilities to women through the appreciation of their professionalism and competence (empowerment);
- integration of the gender's point of view in government policies at the various levels of government (mainstreaming);
- education to the different gender's cultures, promotion of employment, policy of the "times" to reconcile work with family life, prevention and health safeguarding, prevention and repression of violence, etc.

The above objectives imply a greater men's reflectivity on how costly the shortage of reciprocity between sexes can be for men themselves. The comparison on the methods used for

the pursuit of such objectives and the realisation of common projects are some of the main aims of the network which is to be set up.

The network

The setting up of a network of Mediterranean and Balkans Women has the following objectives:

- * to promote relations and exchanges among women from the various countries for the achievement of a mutual knowledge and common actions expressing the experiences and projects of women's changes.
- * to develop sensibility to cultural differences and to the various women cultures in all institutional and associative frames.
- * to provide women and women associations with all instruments (training, means, etc.) for the independent realisation and spreading of their initiatives;
- *to strengthen the institutional and administrative decisions promoting equal opportunities between women and men and among gender cultures in all administrative fields. That is aimed at developing the best practices by integrating the dimension of women cultures in the democratisation of policies. This means also the need to work in order to find adequate financial resources and prescriptive instruments.
- *to support and develop the national and international experiences by women and feminist associations, the N.G.Os and by other organisations. It is to be also noted that in certain areas in the world which are experiencing wars and enormous problems, such Associations are almost the only ones who can guarantee the respect of some democracy. Taking part to the network is for such associations and organisations a main condition to experience further projects aimed at the participation of women to the development policies.

That comparison and that exchange are to be carried out through the following actions:

- periodical thematic seminars
- a multilingual Web site to give information on existing laws and experiences regarding good practices on equal opportunities and experiences of the gender cultures and to be a site for virtual thematic discussion and comparison. The site should be connectable with similar realities created also by groups, organisations and associations;
- a news letter with purposes similar to the Internet site ones to be used in place of and in addition to it;
- co-operative initiatives towards women who are living in conditions of urgent need, either to help the work of women associations acting in various countries or to support the creation of new jobs, even entrepreneurial jobs, with the purpose of assuring an income and autonomy to the women involved, etc.

The Undersigners of the present document of intention undertake herewith to intervene:

1. at the Ministry of Equal Opportunities in order:

- to further appreciate the present project for a network by considering it as a model and pilot experience within the co-operation to the development;
- to be the contact body with the Government and the other Ministries;

2. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order:

- to bring Italian Representatives in foreign countries into action so that a co-operation is activated for the achievement of all co-operation projects;
- to foresee and to assign adequate resources in all co-operation projects for the realisation of projects of co-operation towards women;
- to develop a special care for the Decentralised Co-operation by equally involving Towns, Local Authorities and Women Associations.

The undersigned Bodies and Associations shall hereby promote the "Meda Democracy Project" (whose abstract herewith attached is to be considered as an integral part of the present document of intention).

The network of Mediterranean and Balkans Women is connected with the "European Network of Best Practices to promote equal opportunities" in order to spread the comparison and the exchange even throughout the other European countries.

In order to create a number of network interventions and projects, the Region Emilia-Romagna is to co-ordinate a table gathering women from Local Authorities and Associations (women and feminists) as equal partners for shared responsibilities and common programmes.