



**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN**

Committee on Women's Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Countries

Lisbon (Portugal) - 11 and 12 May 2015

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Tabled on behalf of the **Committee on Women's Rights in the Euro-Mediterranean Countries**

on the theme: “Women and the Media”

The Committee on Women's Rights
of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean:

- 1) Reaffirms that the principle of equal rights for men and women in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil spheres promotes democracy, the rule of law and guarantees respect for human dignity. Therefore, the committee calls for the mobilization of various political, media and socio-economic actors to be more involved in the consolidation and promotion of the culture of gender equality and equity at all levels including in the media, as well as the condemnation of all forms of discrimination and violence against women;
- 2) Regrets that the media image of women focuses on their traditional roles as wives, mothers and housewives, and implants a stereotyped image of women while neglecting their social status as a full partner, especially in such crucial times in which women still suffer marginalization and continue to face more violence. In light of this, it will be necessary to launch awareness campaigns on regional, national and global levels in order to construct a new image of women, based on empowering women and the real roles they play in society;
- 3) Notes that the image of women is used as a media product for commercial purposes in the advertising of detergents and cosmetics, as well as major brands of perfume, clothing, luxury cars and any other type of industry, often sexualizing the image of women. For this reason, it strongly condemns these practices and any practice that aims to use a sexualized image of women for the sake of profit;
- 4) Draws attention to the fact that the media's discourse on women in the Euro-Mediterranean region is biased and influenced by political and conservative religious orientations, and that on most occasions the aforementioned discourse weakens the role of women in society. The Committee also stresses that it is now time to maintain a progressive media discourse which defeats the gender stereotype and reports an objective and balanced image of women. Notes that the education system plays a key role in providing adequate knowledge instruments designed to eliminate gender inequality;

- 5) Recalls that the media is a powerful force and has an important and influential role in public opinion, and from this perspective, media professionals (men and women) must assume their responsibilities in order to promote society's view of women by highlighting their roles in production positions, and social, political, cultural and creative participation to convey their voices and their situation in conflict areas, to increase women's awareness, to guarantee their rights during wars, foreign occupation and violent conflicts;
- 6) Stresses the need to improve the situation of women working in the media, and enable them to participate in decision-making on the bases of transparent criteria, depending on professional competence and equal opportunities. It suggests the creation of a "media women's friend" prize to be awarded every three years by the committee on women's rights to the best figure, program or information and communications organization that stands up for women and a positive image of them in society, as well as devising sources of funding and awarding criteria for this;
- 7) Stresses the importance of the role of women in the fight against the hegemony of male culture and considers that changing the image of women in the media primarily depends on continuing the intellectual and practical struggle in order to consolidate the principles of freedom and equality. The Committee recalls that it is a duty to ensure the right of women to freedom of expression and to the defence of their cause, examining and dealing with these adequately, objectively and professionally;
- 8) Calls to intensify cooperation and communication between, on the one hand, civil society organizations and women's associations and, on the other hand, the media, in order to contribute to increasing awareness of the female cause, by engaging in sensitization and advocacy campaigns to mobilize communities with a view to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and introducing and changing legislation that entrenches this discrimination. These campaigns should stress the need to change the way in which girls are portrayed in the public space which reduces the esteem in which society holds them and promotes violence against girls. Strongly condemns the practice of honour killings, torture, rape, stoning and public humiliation; stresses the need to use the media in combating violence against women in the Euro-Mediterranean countries;

- 9) Appreciates the experience of media regulation groups in many of the Assembly's Member States, and supports the idea of creating a "group of Euro-Mediterranean media regulators" such as "the European group for audiovisual media services", composed of professionals and experts in the field of gender equality, in order to archive all violations against women and to monitor and condemn all violence against them. The Committee calls on these groups to follow up the image of women in the media so as to identify all of the prejudice that they experience, and to report the matter to the authorities concerned;
- 10) Urges governments in the Euro-Mediterranean countries to develop national strategies in the sector of information and communications based on gender approach, to encourage research on gender equality in media products. It also urges attributing greater importance to the role of education in enhancing women rights and culture as well as training women in the field of information technology and communications. The Committee recommends the adoption of deterrent legislation related to the degrading exploitation of women in media without prejudice to the principle of press and media freedom; Recommends that Euro-Mediterranean countries adopt a national legislative framework which will further balance the participation of women and men in decision-making positions in the media, in particular in management, programming and regulatory bodies;
- 11) Calls to increase training workshops for journalists on the issues of women's rights in the Euro-Mediterranean region in order to raise awareness on respecting these rights, and for better dissemination of all international charters on the subject. It also stresses the importance of intensifying the exchange of experiences and expertise between journalists from both the North and South shores of the Mediterranean in order to exchange good practices, and to thus speed up the changes towards a more positive and real image of women in the media and the enhancement of their role in the society.
