"Equal Futures Partnership": Women political participation and economic empowerment

Advancing women political and economic participation

- EU will conduct targeted campaigns on political and economic participation of women with specific focus on countries in transition. The EU will aim to ensure that role of women in civil life and their rights are safeguarded in transition periods. Among other activities we will finance trainings of women to make their voices heard in media; strengthening women’s political participation at the local level; helping women to take an active role in difficult issues like justice and reconciliation. "Political and Economic Empowerment of women in Southern Mediterranean Region" programme will be launched focussing on promoting the access and effective participation of marginalised women in economic and public life.

- The EU undertakes to contribute to promoting women's equal and full participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. The EU will promote the representation of women and the availability of adequate resources for dedicated mediation gender expertise from an early stage of mediation processes onwards. Specific indicators to monitor progress will be refined and a report on progress will be compiled at least every two years. We recognise that women's under representation in mediation processes and peace negotiations as well as the lack of gender expertise in mediation teams seriously limits the extent to which women's experiences of conflict, and consequent needs for justice and recovery, are addressed in these processes.

Addressing violence against women as a barrier to political and economic participation

- EU commits to support initiatives, including of civil society, against gender based violence and feminicide in its external relations. Violence against women and girls is phenomenon affecting all societies worldwide. This is the most widespread human rights violation of our times, claiming millions of victims each year and affecting all societies.

- EU will include a gender advisor and/or human rights one for each of its Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and will develop a standard training module on gender with a view to pre-deployment training to all seconded staff.
• EU will strengthen its support to partner countries in combating gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls. EU will seek continued support for the biannual resolution on violence against women and will further promote the withdrawal of existing reservations that are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention by State Parties to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

• EU will support in its external action initiatives against harmful traditional practices, in particular Female Genitale Mutilation (FGM). EU will also finance information campaigns on FGM within its Member States.

Advancing women’s participation in the formal economy within the EU

• EU will make a proposal for legal instrument on gender equality in boardrooms of listed companies in Europe. Women in the EU continue to be under-represented in decision-making processes and positions, in particular at the highest levels, despite the fact that they make up nearly half the workforce and more than half of new university graduates in the EU. 'Women on the Board Pledge for Europe' was launched in 2011 calling for publicly listed companies in Europe to voluntarily commit to increasing women's presence on their boards to 30% by 2015 and 40% by 2020. A year later, only 24 companies had signed the pledge, which is a slow rate of progress.

• Reconciliation of professional and private life deserves special attention as it is a precondition for women to be able to choose the life they want without external constraints. An approach is needed combining family related leave arrangements, flexible work arrangements and more care services, allowing both women and men to reconcile their work with private and family life. The European Commission commits to report on the European Union Member States' performance with regard to childcare facilities (Barcelona targets).

• European Union will support awareness-raising activities, equal pay initiatives at the workplace as well as the development of tools for employers to correct unjustified gender pay gaps. It will also seek to encourage women to enter non-traditional professions. The gender pay gap in the EU remains persistently high. The gender pay gap is a complex phenomenon and goes far beyond the issue of equal pay for equal work. Women are still confronted with many inequalities in the labour market (vertical and horizontal segregation, difficulties in reconciling family and professional obligations, etc.).

Work with stakeholders

• The EU commits to implement its first ever Action Plan on Gender Equality in Development as part of the strategy to reach the Millennium Development Goals. The EU will concentrate to include gender equality in its political and policy dialogues, to further work with civil society, and to make aid more effective and transparent. The EU commits to report on the progress every year.

• EU commits to implement the Memorandum of Understanding with UN Women, a strategic partnership in the field of gender equality. Gender justice, women’s leadership and political participation, comprehensive economic and social development of women and girls are some of the areas of mutual concern and cooperation. Implementation of gender programmes will be supported in South Mediterranean, Africa, Europe.
Data gathering

- EU commits to the promotion of full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including the development and updating of indicators, with the support of the European Institute for Gender Equality. This also includes the development of comparable data at EU level on gender-relevant matters and statistics broken down by sex.