

The European Union and Turkey - cooperating on gender equality

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Gender equality is a fundamental right and a policy priority for the European Union (EU). The EU is committed to promoting gender equality by working to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and promoting an inclusive society for all. Women's rights are part of human rights and the democratisation process of any country. As such, they are central to the EU accession process for Turkey and a mandatory political requirement that must be fulfilled.

Gender equality is indispensable for women to play an active role and fully participate in economic and political life. In Turkey, low - and even declining - female participation in the labour force leaves significant potential for the greater economic empowerment of women. Women are also under-represented at decision making levels and in political life in general.

Important work is already underway to tackle such challenges, with the EU accession process contributing to the momentum for change.

The EU is also working to support the eradication of violence against women through the promotion of measures to prevent crimes, protect the vulnerable and prosecute perpetrators. Such violence, including honour killings, constitutes a breach of fundamental rights, including the right to life, safety, freedom, dignity and physical and emotional integrity.

Civil society plays an important role in promoting gender equality. Civil society organisations and women's rights defenders help push for improved respect of women's rights via their strong collective voice in the community and in providing much needed support and assistance.



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A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT IN TURKEY

The European Union has already provided EUR 36 million to support programmes aimed at promoting gender equality, strengthening women's NGO networks, combating violence against women, supporting women entrepreneurship and increasing employment.

This important work continues with a further EUR 63 million directed towards ongoing projects and schemes with the following objectives:

- Empowerment of women and women's NGOs in least developed regions by incorporating a gender sensitive approach into the service provision policies of government organisations, local administrations and NGOs, and improving their organisational and technical capacities.
- Promoting gender equality in working life to address gaps in labour and social security legislation as well as improving staff competence in institutions.
- Promoting women's employment by increasing the capacity to design and implement effective labour market measures.
- Strengthening pre-school education and increasing enrolment rates to help promote women's participation in the workforce through improved childcare services.
- Increasing enrolment rates for girls in secondary education and vocational training, reducing drop-out rates, and raising parents' awareness of the importance of education especially for girls.

2012 AND BEYOND

Looking ahead, around EUR 15 million has been allocated to future projects to establish shelters for women subjected to violence and domestic abuse, promote gender equality in the education system, and provide support for local human rights boards to improve complaints procedures and investigation standards. In cooperation with the Turkish authorities, further funds will also be dedicated to projects in the priority area of gender equality.

FIND OUT MORE

Delegation of the European Union to Turkey:
<http://www.avrupa.info.tr>

EU Action to Protect Women's rights:
http://www.eeas.europa.eu/_human_rights/women/index_en.htm

New Strategy on Gender Equality of the European Union (2010-2015):
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=890>

Republic of Turkey Ministry of Family and Social Policies:
<http://www.aile.gov.tr>

Promoting Gender Equality at Workplaces Twinning Project:
<http://www.isteesitlik.org>

Gateway to Human Resources Development Operational Programme:
<http://www.ikg.gov.tr>

Women's Shelters Project:
<http://www.sigimmaevleri.net/>

Combating Violence against Women Project:
<http://www.ailecisidet.net/>