

Human Rights Council - Forum on Minority Issues - Fourth Session Guaranteeing the rights of minority women 29 and 30 November 2011 - Geneva

1. The Greek economy is going through a new, exceptionally critical phase. The present juncture is the most critical period in Greece's post-war history. At stake are achievements that have been attained in recent decades, driving the country of the euro, setting the Greek economy, the standard of living, social and international standards, back for many decades. The choice that has been made by the Greek people to fight within the euro area in close cooperation with our European partners has a heavy cost. There has been a reduction in income and salaries, high unemployment rates, reduction in employment, serious budget cuttings in public expenditure with implications on social structures, high taxation and increase of poverty. The economic crisis has had the greatest impact on the poorest, most marginalized and vulnerable groups.
2. At the same time "under the Dublin Regulation" Greece faces the challenge of dealing with vast inflow of refugees and undocumented migrants, beyond the capacity of the State to deal with this situation, which has been described as a "humanitarian-crisis" with many asylum seekers, including women and children, living on the streets.
3. In consistency with the position that fundamental human rights should not be given marginal attention in times of crisis and that State obligations with regard to the protection of individual and social rights, women's rights, human rights, minority rights, especially within this difficult economic and social situation should be adhered to and respected. The Greek government is taking action to translate values and declarations within the limitations set by economic and budgetary constraints, into policy in everyday lives of citizens, making the best possible use of available resources.
4. In this respect we highlight that Gender Equality is a value, a fundamental human right and basic aim of every modern democracy. In times of crisis Gender Equality is not a luxury. On the contrary, it is a core component of economic, social and cultural policies enacted in the effort to emerge from the crisis.
5. Our vision is of a society in which men and women equally share goods, obligations and rights-in work, politics, power, leisure time, care, family and personal life, A society in which men and women decide what they are going to study, what kind of work they would like to undertake, how many children they would like to have, whether they would like to participate in public affairs-without the burden of gender stereotypes that proscribe professions, salaries, tasks, earnings, and all the activities of daily life.
6. Crises always have a stronger effect on vulnerable population group, in which women constitute the majority. When gender-based discrimination is interwoven with and aggravated by other types of social discrimination (class, ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, remote residency, etc.) large categories of women face multiple discrimination. The reference to multiple discrimination reflects the recognition and the political will for the implementation of policies that will diminish this phenomenon. Unemployed women, immigrants, young women, single parents, disabled, of ethnic and religious minorities, Roma, women living in remote areas-these are all groups of women

more vulnerable not only to the effects of the economic crisis, but also to male violence in all its forms. The Greek government has given top priority to these groups of women in public interventions.

7. The National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 recognises that despite the significant efforts that have been made in Greece during the last 30 years, gender based-discrimination is still a reality. Discrimination is directly connected to gender inequalities in employment, income, political and social power, leisure, and care for dependent persons, family and personal life. The Programme has taken two points into account a) the government's orientation to provide services to citizens and b) feminist analysis on public policies. The Programme is of national scope. Its actions cover all the country's regions, addressing a wide range of regional as well as national public policies. In accordance with the framework of good governance-including transparency and accountability-extensive consultation has been undertaken with women's organisations, all parliamentary parties, women's groups, and with all former General Secretaries for Gender Equality. The evaluation of the National Programme results is conducted on an annual basis. The National Programme is funded by the National Strategic Reference Framework.
8. The Programme has four strategic goals a) protection of women's rights and orientation of interventions towards women's groups that face multiple discrimination b) Prevention and combating of all forms and types of violence against women c) Support of women's employment and their financial independence d) Highlighting of gender equality through cultural creation.
9. The Programme is structured on three pillars a) improvement, strengthening and enforcement of gender equality legislation b) specific gender equality policies developed by the national mechanisms for gender c) gender mainstreaming through policies in cooperation with other Ministries.

#### Minority Women and girls and the right to education

10. The Greek Government is firmly committed to continue its policy to uphold the right to education for the Muslim minority and is working in the direction of a) Improving the functioning of the existing minority schools (188 primary minority schools, 2 secondary schools and 2 Koranic schools in Thrace). b) Accommodating the preference to the public educational system increasingly shown by person belonging to the Muslim minority. c) Accommodating for courses aiming at preserving the linguistic and cultural characteristics of persons belonging to the minority who attend public schools.
11. Higher Education: a 0.5% quota for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes/Institutions of students who are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace was introduced 15 years ago. This positive measure regarding entrance examinations led to 500 students per year entering Greek universities and higher technical institutions. The obvious advantages of this measure are the promotion of

further integration of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace into wider society, in an affective and inclusive way and the improvement of access to the labour market. Lack of education is crucial for economic marginalisation.

12. One of the major obstacles in ensuring employment is the lack of national language competence. The majority should enjoy the right to learning its maternal language, at the same time competence in Greek (the national language) is absolutely essential. While respecting linguistic, religious and cultural rights of the Muslim minority there has been continuing effort in furthering the educational opportunities for the mastery of Greek language. The most important challenge is to introduce children from preschool to catch up with Greek. The number of minority children enrolling in upper secondary education, especially that of girls, is growing very quickly, while drop out rates from compulsory school are going down at a fast pace.
13. Good Practice: Students in Adult Training Centres for 2005-2008: Roma: men 1049-women 1078, same period Muslims: men 308-women 2663, immigrants: men 2350-women 3850. Trainees in the Programme "Learning of the Greek Language as second language by employed Immigrants" 2005-2008"men 6842-women 9031.
14. Good Practice: Greek lessons to primary school students all through the year and a special summer course in July 2011 with 642 students, boys and girls. Lessons to students who failed exams and were leftover for the autumn exams: 391 students' high school and upper high school-success 80%. Two communities with high drop out rates 17 students leftover for autumn exams, 14 students passed exams. 222 students participated in the Creative Workshops for Youth during the summer 2011. October 2011: Greek language lessons for adults of the minority. Turkish language lessons for educators of the majority population. Mobile units visiting remote minority villages (library, laptop, learning with electronic games). Enhancement courses in primary schools, high-schools and upper high schools.