

# A Progressive Promoter of Women's Rights? Comparing EU Policy towards the ACP and the EMP Countries

Eleonoora Väänänen



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A Progressive Promoter of Women's Rights?  
Comparing EU Policy towards the ACP  
and the EMP Countries

Eleonoora Väänänen

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## **Abstract**

The paper offers an analysis of the degree to which two different external policy frameworks of the European Union (EU) have institutionalised and operationalised the EU's commitment to women's rights and gender equality. It compares the EU's relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), using Senegal and Morocco as case studies. Although the comparison shows some resemblances between the two cases, as a whole women's rights seem more deeply embedded in the institutional framework of EU-ACP relations than that of Euro-Mediterranean relations, and this together with the EU's approach towards implementation has enabled its women's rights policy to be slightly more influential on the ground in Senegal than in Morocco. However, both EU-ACP and EMP frameworks have their limits, reflecting the more general problem of inconsistency between the EU's declaratory objectives and its actual promotion of human rights.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Even though women's rights and gender equality have become enshrined in a series of international conventions with nearly universal membership, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), women's dignity and rights "are persistently compromised by law and by custom in ways that men's are not".<sup>2</sup> In international politics issues such as "inequality of opportunity in education, employment, housing, and health care; rape and domestic violence", as well as a variety of other similar matters, have traditionally been seen merely as specialised interests of the women's rights movement.<sup>3</sup> However, it is increasingly recognised that women's rights and gender equality are central to international politics not least because empowering women around the world also contributes to general levels of development.

The Treaty on European Union (TEU) lists equality between women and men as one of its foundational values<sup>4</sup> and it has been suggested that the European Union (EU) is becoming "one of the most progressive polities on earth in terms of its promotion of equal opportunities for women and men".<sup>5</sup> However, it is also frequently claimed that the EU is inconsistent in promoting its values. It has been observed that

[m]uch institutional rhetoric has been spent on the EU's role in promoting principles of democracy and human rights, yet few analyses ascertain the extent to which the rhetoric is translated into political practice.<sup>6</sup>

This paper contributes to the research on the extent to which the EU's rhetoric on women's rights has in fact translated into promoting women's rights in practice beyond the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Erwan Lannon and Enrique Ibañez for their guidance and support.

<sup>2</sup> J. Peters & A. Wolper, "Introduction", in J. Peters & A. Wolper (eds.), *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995, p. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> European Union, "Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union of 3 December 2007", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C326, 26 October 2012, [hereafter Lisbon], Art. 2 TEU.

<sup>5</sup> Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000, p. 452, cited in K. Arts, "Gender in ACP-EU Relations: The Cotonou Agreement", in M. Lister & M. Carbone (eds.), *New Pathways in International Development: Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy*, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate, 2006, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> R. Balfour, "Principles of democracy and human rights: A review of the European Union's strategies towards its neighbours", in S. Lucarelli & I. Manners (eds.), *Values and Principles in European Union Foreign Policy*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 114.

Focusing on the EU's commitment to women's rights in its external relations, this paper compares two external policies of the EU that are directed at two different geographical regions, the EU-African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) relations and the Euro-Mediterranean relations. Both regional cooperation frameworks are well-established and institutionalised. However, they have not been extensively studied or subjected to comparisons from the perspective of women's rights and gender equality promotion. As case studies, this paper concentrates on Senegal and Morocco, which are both African countries but belong to two different regional policies of the EU, the EU-ACP and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) respectively. The similarities between Senegal and Morocco make them interesting cases for searching for unexpected differences in the EU's approach.<sup>7</sup> Even though the differences in wealth are quite notable between the two countries, both Senegal and Morocco are amongst the most developed countries in their respective geographical groups in terms of democratic reform. However, women's rights are constantly and persistently violated in both countries. Interestingly, the women's rights and gender equality issues that still prevail in these two countries are also rather similar, making them particularly suitable cases to study.

The research focus of this paper is twofold: firstly, it asks to what extent these two external policy frameworks have institutionalised the promotion of women's rights and gender equality; and secondly, it evaluates how successful they have been in turning the commitments on paper into practical achievements.

For the first part of the research question the frequency of references to women and gender equality, as well as the breadth of different types of rights referred to in the Cotonou Agreement on the one hand and the Barcelona Declaration, EU-Morocco Association Agreement and the Action Plan on the other hand, are used as indicators to measure the EU's commitment to women's issues. For the second part of the research question, research includes the analysis of a variety of sources such as official EU publications and working documents, secondary literature and elite interviewing. Both cases are first discussed individually before comparing them. The research naturally has some limitations and it is important to be aware of them. Given the small number of cases analysed, the objective of the study cannot be to

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<sup>7</sup> J. Hopkin, "Comparative Methods", in D. Marsh & G. Stoker (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 266.

proclaim a generalisable conclusion about the EU's promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the entirety of its external relations. Rather, the objective is primarily limited to discussing the particularities and specificities of the two regional policy frameworks.

The paper consists of three parts. In the first part, the guiding principles of the EU's commitment to women's rights and gender equality are introduced. Part 2 discusses the women's rights provisions in the institutional frameworks concerning the EU-ACP and EU-EMP relations and analyses the implementation of the women's rights provisions in the cases of Senegal and Morocco, focusing on the three main means of implementation, namely political dialogue, gender mainstreaming and specific actions. In the third part of the article, the differences and similarities between the two cases are highlighted. After scrutinising the range of convergences and divergences, it is suggested that in the end the EU-ACP institutional framework emerges from the comparison as the more advanced policy framework for women's rights promotion. The implications of these findings are discussed in the conclusions.

### **Guiding principles and instruments of the EU's commitment to women's rights and gender equality**

The TEU lists equality between women and men as one of the EU's foundational values.<sup>8</sup> The principles of non-discrimination and equality between women and men are also enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.<sup>9</sup> Equality is not only referred to as a foundational value of the EU, but the TEU also provides for its inclusion in the external policies of the EU. The TEU notes that a primary objective of the EU is to "promote [...] its values".<sup>10</sup> The guiding principles for the EU's external action reiterate this objective: "The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation", including human rights and equality.<sup>11</sup> Further, the treaty stipulates that "[i]n all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women".<sup>12</sup> These provisions form the legal basis for the EU's support and promotion of women's rights and gender equality in its external

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<sup>8</sup> European Union, "Lisbon", *op. cit.*, Art. 2 TEU.

<sup>9</sup> European Union, "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C83/389, 30 March 2010, Art. 21; Art. 23.

<sup>10</sup> European Union, "Lisbon", *op. cit.*, Art. 3(1) TEU.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 21(1) TEU.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 8 TFEU.

relations. They have been complemented by political commitments at the international level. For instance, while the EU is not a party to the CEDAW, all its member states are, and so according to the Commission, "the standards of CEDAW should be considered as an obligation of the Union in general."<sup>13</sup> The EU actively participated in the latest World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing, and supports the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which are some of the most important common efforts for ensuring women's rights and gender equality globally.

In the field of development policy specifically, the EU has developed an overall strategy and several instruments for advancing women's rights and gender equality. These include the Council Conclusions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation from 2007 and the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015 (or as it is often called, the Gender Action Plan (GAP)). According to the Council Conclusions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, there are

close inter-linkages between sustainable achievements in poverty reduction and development and the empowerment of women, including their political empowerment. Gender equality should therefore be a *core aspect* in the EU development policy's programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

The GAP also refers to concrete instruments. It promotes a concrete approach that consists of three dimensions that complement one another: political dialogue, gender mainstreaming, and specific actions.<sup>15</sup> Political dialogue, the first concrete mechanism for promoting women's rights and gender equality, is undertaken at the highest level. The specificities of the political dialogue are determined on a country-

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, "How could the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) be implemented in the EU legal framework?", 2011, retrieved 3 April 2015, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201109/20110909ATT26166/20110909ATT26166EN.pdf>, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the European Union, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation – Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council", 15 May 2007, retrieved 22 April 2015, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209561%202007%20INIT>, p. 2, emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, "EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015", Brussels 8 March 2010, retrieved 23 April 2015, <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/5745.pdf>, p. 7.

specific basis so that the context of the partner country can be taken into account as much as possible. Gender mainstreaming, the second concrete mechanism, aims at

policies in all areas (e.g. economy, health, education, environment, infrastructure, trade, science and research, peace and security) [to be] designed in such a way as to address specific concerns, needs and constraints of both women and men.<sup>16</sup>

This approach requires consistent work in measuring the distribution of opportunities and constraints as well as supporting the partner country with building up the technical capacities needed for gender mainstreaming. *Specific actions*, the third concrete mechanism, give “added impetus” to the other measures and are often a more locally targeted approach.<sup>17</sup> While the gender mainstreaming approach is very important, its effects often take a long time to materialise. With the help of specific actions, the EU therefore tries to help women whose situation requires immediate improvement.<sup>18</sup> Specific actions can either be directed at supporting the political dialogue and gender mainstreaming, or they can go beyond the political dialogue and gender mainstreaming when they alone are insufficient or too sensitive for the partner country and other solutions have to be found.<sup>19</sup>

In short, based on the provisions of the EU’s external action, the Union has a strong mandate to act in furtherance of women’s rights and needs. It is therefore not surprising that this objective has become part of the EU’s regional policies, such as the ACP and EMP.

### **The institutional framework and implementation of women’s rights in the ACP and EMP partnerships**

This section determines the extent to which its commitment to women’s rights and gender equality plays out in the EU’s regional policies towards the ACP states and the EMP states by analysing the cases of Senegal and Morocco.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> M. R. Lister, “Gender and European Union Development Policy”, in M. R. Lister & M. Carbone (eds.), *New Pathways in International Development: Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy*, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 17-30, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, “EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development 2010-2015”, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

## *The EU and the ACP: The case of Senegal*

### The institutional framework

The institutional framework of the EU-ACP has a long history. The European Economic Community-ACP partnership started in 1957. Since the 1960s, the EEC-ACP relationship has been framed by regional partnership agreements, initially by the Yaoundé I and II (1963-1974) and the Lomé Conventions (1975-2000). The current legal agreement that forms the institutional basis concerning the relations, the Cotonou Agreement, was signed in 2000 and entered into force in 2003. It has since been revised twice, in 2005 and 2010, and is valid until 2020. It is a regional programme aimed at enhancing the economic, social and cultural development of the ACP countries. The Cotonou Agreement has three pillars: aid, trade and political dialogue.<sup>20</sup> 78 states are presently signatories to the agreement.

In comparison with the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions, the Cotonou Agreement places a far greater emphasis on democracy, good governance, human rights and the “bottom-up processes of development”.<sup>21</sup> It is also a lot more elaborate on women’s rights and gender equality than the previous partnership agreements with the ACP; women were in fact only mentioned for the first time in the third Lomé Convention.<sup>22</sup> In its preamble, the Cotonou Agreement refers to the CEDAW among other UN instruments. Explicit references to women’s rights can be found at the very beginning of the agreement in the preamble and in article 1 (Objectives of the Partnership), which calls for a systematic account to be taken of the situation of women and gender issues in all areas. Under article 9 (Essential Elements and Fundamental Element) the agreement states that

[t]he parties undertake to promote and protect all fundamental freedoms and human rights, be they civil and political, or economic, social and cultural. In this context, the Parties reaffirm the equality of men and women.

There is a separate article devoted specifically to gender issues (article 31). It reads:

Cooperation shall help strengthen policies and programmes that improve, ensure and broaden the equal participation of men and women in all spheres of political,

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<sup>20</sup> J. Mackie, “Continuity and Change in International Cooperation: The ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement and its First Revision”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2008, p. 143.

<sup>21</sup> M. Smith, “EU External Relations” in M. Cini & N. Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (eds.), *European Union Politics*, 4th ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 218.

<sup>22</sup> Lister, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

economic, social and cultural life. Cooperation shall help improve the access of women to all resources required for the full exercise of their fundamental rights. More specifically, cooperation shall create the appropriate framework to:

- (a) integrate a gender-sensitive approach and concerns at every level of development cooperation including macroeconomic policies, strategies and operations; and
- (b) encourage the adoption of specific positive measures in favour of women such as:
  - (i) participation in national and local politics;
  - (ii) support for women's organisations;
  - (iii) access to basic social services, especially to education and training, health care and family planning;
  - (iv) access to productive resources, especially to land and credit and to labour market; and
  - (v) taking specific account of women in emergency aid and rehabilitation operations.<sup>23</sup>

The breadth of the rights referred to is also quite remarkable. Given the nature of the Cotonou Agreement, economic rights are naturally important, but political, civil, health and family rights are also included. In the 2010 revision of the Cotonou Agreement, women's rights and needs are referred to in two of the new articles (art. 31a on HIV/AIDS and art. 11 on peace-building and mediation).<sup>24</sup> Gender is also mentioned as a topic for political dialogue between the parties (article 8 on Political Dialogue). The complementing Country Strategy Paper for 2008-2013 for Senegal echoes the tone of the Cotonou Agreement and depicts gender issues as cross-cutting.<sup>25</sup>

In short, women's rights are an important part of the Cotonou Agreement. It is for this reason that the Cotonou Agreement has been called a "groundbreaker"<sup>26</sup> as regards women's rights and gender equality in development.

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<sup>23</sup> European Union, 2000/483/EC: Partnership agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L317, 15 December 2000.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> République du Sénégal – Communauté européenne, "Document de stratégie pays et programme indicatif national pour la période 2008-2013", retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/csp-nip-senegal-2008-2013\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/csp-nip-senegal-2008-2013_fr.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

## Implementation

Even though women's rights and gender equality are deeply embedded in the Cotonou Agreement, the provisions remain rather abstract. More concrete mechanisms for promoting women's rights and gender equality can be found in the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development for 2010-2015 (GAP). The GAP promotes a concrete approach that consists of three dimensions that complement one another: political dialogue, gender mainstreaming, and specific actions.<sup>27</sup>

The *political dialogues* the EU conducts with African states are in general much more codified and structured than anywhere else.<sup>28</sup> According to the GAP, the main topics of the dialogue that relate to women's rights are whether or how the partner country is fulfilling women's rights and gender equality imperatives and how the EU can support the partner country in doing so.<sup>29</sup> However, it has been observed that in general women's or gender issues have in fact been "notable so far mainly by their absence from the dialogue".<sup>30</sup> As noticed in an internal EU study, one problem of article 8 on political dialogue in the Cotonou Agreement that relates to the comprehensiveness of the dialogue is that the article denotes a number of issues to be dealt with in the political dialogue. Some authorities from the ACP countries take advantage of the wide range of issues and prefer to dwell on other matters at the expense of human rights.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in some cases, the EU does not seem to be willing to bring politically sensitive issues to the table where its own interests are at stake, Nigeria being a case in point.<sup>32</sup> Of course, the level of the EU's "inclusivity and quality of involvement varies substantially from country to country"<sup>33</sup> in the Cotonou framework. A lot of it is up to the EU Delegation in the country, for example in terms

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<sup>27</sup> European Commission, "EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015", Brussels 8 March 2010, retrieved 23 April 2015, <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/5745.pdf>, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> R. Youngs, Lecture at the College of Europe, Bruges, 15 April 2015.

<sup>29</sup> European Commission, "EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015", *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Painter & Ulmer cited in Lister, *op. cit.*, p. 25; Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> European Commission, Directorate General for External Policies, "Political Dialogue on Human Rights under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement", March 2014, retrieved 5 April 2015, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/deve/dv/study\\_political\\_dialogue/\\_study\\_political\\_dialogue\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/deve/dv/study_political_dialogue/_study_political_dialogue_en.pdf), p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

of the qualifications and willingness of the Delegation staff.<sup>34</sup> The problem of limited capabilities from the side of the EU has implications for the frequency of discussions and the process of following them up.<sup>35</sup> However, in the case of Senegal, a positive development presents itself. The EU has started a “structured dialogue” on gender with Senegal. This dialogue has been led by Italy and has focused on violence against women and parity law.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding the second mechanism, *gender mainstreaming*, it has been suggested that the practical application of the declaratory gender mainstreaming policies of the EU has so far had “varying success”.<sup>37</sup> Kantola notes that “EU gender mainstreaming in development policy illustrates a ‘phenomenal commitment’ to gender mainstreaming on paper. However, it suffers from huge discrepancies between theory and practice”.<sup>38</sup> Kantola argues further that gender mainstreaming has not been consistently applied in all the policy areas with the ACP. While there have been various initiatives in some areas such as health and education, other areas such as trade have been neglected, even though, for example, the potentially detrimental impact of trade liberalisation on women is “widely recognised”.<sup>39</sup> Areas where most of the EU’s funding is channelled to, such as transport, have seen virtually no attempts at gender mainstreaming by the EU.<sup>40</sup> Senegal is no exception to these general observations on the ACP. For example, the Country Strategy Paper for 2008-2013 is rather vague on gender mainstreaming.<sup>41</sup>

Regarding the third concrete mechanism, *specific actions*, according to the Commission’s 2012 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development, the EU has one on-going

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> European Commission, “2012 Report on the implementation of ‘EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development 2010-2015’”, Brussels, 28 November 2012, retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/working-paper-report-gender-equality-2010-2015-swd2012410-201211\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/working-paper-report-gender-equality-2010-2015-swd2012410-201211_en.pdf), pp. 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> J. Kantola, *Gender and the European Union*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 130.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> République du Sénégal – Communauté européenne, “Document de stratégie pays et programme indicatif national pour la période 2008-2013”, retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/csp-nip-senegal-2008-2013\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/csp-nip-senegal-2008-2013_fr.pdf).

project in Senegal that has gender equality as an objective.<sup>42</sup> When it comes to funding, according to the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2014-2017 for Senegal, only 6 million euros, provided by Italy, are envisaged to gender issues. By contrast, the average sum for each of the 14 sectors targeted during the period covered by the NIP is 85,5 million euros.<sup>43</sup>

To sum up this case study, the EU's actions in Senegal do not seem to reach the standards set by the Cotonou Agreement. Gender equality has become part of the political dialogue in Senegal, but it is unclear how extensive these dialogues are. However, the dialogues seem to be the EU's primary means to implement its commitment to women's rights and gender equality. By contrast, gender mainstreaming and specific projects do not seem to play such a big role in the EU's approach in Senegal.

#### *The EU and the EMP: The case of Morocco*

##### The institutional framework

The EU's policy towards its Southern neighbours is a lot more recent than its ACP policy. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also called the Barcelona Process, was created in 1995 with the Barcelona Declaration as its founding document. The EMP is a multilateral regional cooperation framework that presently covers 12 countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East. The regional approach also has three slightly different priority areas than the ACP framework: institutional dialogue, governance and human rights; economic integration and sustainable development; and social and human development.<sup>44</sup> The EMP's regional approach is complemented by a stronger bilateral framework. This is based on the Association Agreements (AA). The EU-Morocco AA that was signed within the framework of the Barcelona Process in 1996 and entered into force in 2000 forms the legal basis of EU-Morocco relations

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<sup>42</sup> European Commission, "2012 Report on the Implementation of 'EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development 2010-2015'", op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> République du Sénégal – Union européenne, "Programme indicatif national pour la période 2014-2017", retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/senegal/documents/page\\_content/20150105\\_pin\\_11efed.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/senegal/documents/page_content/20150105_pin_11efed.pdf), p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> European Commission, Directorate General International Cooperation and Development, "Countries & Regions: Southern Neighbourhood – Regional cooperation with the Mediterranean Partners", retrieved 9 April 2015, <https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/13541>.

and is therefore also an important part of the institutional framework.<sup>45</sup> In 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was created. This was a new type of policy that was thought to complement the Barcelona Process and was more focused on the bilateral level with AAs and Action Plans (AP) tailor-made for each country. Morocco signed an ENP-AP with the EU in 2005 (with an updated version agreed upon in 2013). In the AP, Morocco committed itself to reform and to the pursuit of approximation with the standards and legislation of the EU.<sup>46</sup>

Regarding women's rights and gender equality within the institutional framework, even though the Barcelona Declaration as the founding document of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership identifies respect for human rights as one of the central objectives, very few references to women's rights can be found in the actual text. Where women's rights are referred to, they are only conceived of as economic rights. The Declaration states that the partners "recognize the key role of women in development and undertake to promote their active participation in economic and social life and in the creation of employment."<sup>47</sup> No concrete policies or benchmarks as to how these rights are to be achieved are mentioned, apart from two passing remarks on attention needing to be paid to women in dialogue on education and working conditions.<sup>48</sup> The Barcelona Declaration can therefore be criticised for giving very little attention to women and gender and for a narrow understanding of women's rights.<sup>49</sup>

In the EU-Morocco AA that was part of the Barcelona Process, the human rights clause, i.e. the essential element clause does not say anything about women's rights.<sup>50</sup> In the AA, women are mentioned only once under the chapter on Cooperation in the Social Field in article 71 which envisages the promotion "of the role of women in the economic and social development process *through education*

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<sup>45</sup> European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, retrieved 13 April 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/country/enpi\\_csp\\_morocco\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/country/enpi_csp_morocco_en.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> European Union, "The Barcelona Declaration", 27-28 November 1995, retrieved 9 April 2015, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/bd\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/euromed/docs/bd_en.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>49</sup> J. Orbie, "Gender in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership", in M. Lister & M. Carbone (eds.), *New Pathways in International Development: Gender and Civil Society in EU Policy*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, p. 62.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

*and the media*".<sup>51</sup> It could be said that this limits gender awareness to the areas of education and the media, undermining the idea of gender mainstreaming to include all aspects of policy-making.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the majority of the AAs with Southern Mediterranean states also note that "the promotion of women's economic and social development should be 'in line with' the national policy of the Mediterranean country."<sup>53</sup> In the EU-Morocco AA, article 71 reads in its entirety: "promoting the role of women in the economic and social development process through education and the media *in step with Moroccan policy on the matter*".<sup>54</sup>

After the publication of the Barcelona Declaration and the ratification of the AA, concerns were raised by the Commission about their "limited gender-sensitivity".<sup>55</sup> These concerns intensified with the publication of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arab Human Development Report of 2005 titled *Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World*, which became an important reference document both globally and for the EU. Indeed, the Presidency Conclusions of the EMP Barcelona Summit of 2005 came to contain several references to women, greatly reflecting the ideas put forth by the UNDP.<sup>56</sup>

Yet, the institutional framework could still be criticised for limited gender-sensitivity when the first AP for Morocco was produced. The AP listed promotion and protection of women's rights under the envisaged actions for human rights in political dialogue and reforms. They were specified to include the following:

apply the recent reforms of the Family Code; combat discrimination and violence against women pursuant to the [CEDAW]; [...] promote the role of women in social and economic progress; protection of pregnant women in the workplace.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> European Union, "Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part", *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 70/2, 18 March 2000, retrieved 14 April 2015, Art. 71(1)c (emphasis added).

<sup>52</sup> Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup> European Union, "Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other *op. cit.*", Art. 71(1)c (emphasis added).

<sup>55</sup> Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> Council of the European Union, "Sommet marquant le dixième anniversaire du partenariat euro-méditerranéen", Barcelona, 28 November 2005, retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-05-327\\_fr.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-05-327_fr.htm).

<sup>57</sup> Point 2(1)6, European Commission, "EU-Morocco ENP Action Plan", 2006, retrieved 14 April 2015, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/library/content/eu-morocco-enp-action-plan>.

In the new AP for 2013-2017 promotion of women's rights has been given more attention, increasing the gender-sensitivity of the institutional framework. In comparison with the four points for promotion and protection of women's rights in the earlier AP that were listed above, the new AP covers the implementation of the CEDAW and proposes more points: the establishment of an *Autorité pour la parité*, implementing the *Agenda gouvernemental pour l'égalité 2011-2015*; implementing the conclusions of the Marrakech 2009 Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on women; creating new mechanisms and structures for women's rights and reinforcing existing ones; the implementation of the Family Code including training of judges and strengthening family courts; setting up *Fonds de solidarité familiale*; completing the legislative framework for the fight against violence against women; and the implementation of relevant provisions of the *Code du travail*.<sup>58</sup> The Country Strategy Paper for Morocco also contains a large number of references to women and gender.<sup>59</sup>

In short, the main institutional documents, the Barcelona Declaration and the Association Agreement, give very little attention to the role of women, but the current Action Plan contains a number of references to women and gender.

### Implementation

The extent to which the EU has been able to promote women's rights and gender equality in practice in Morocco can be analysed by looking at the same means of implementation as in the case of Senegal, political dialogue, gender mainstreaming and specific projects.

With regard to the first building block of the EU's implementation, *political dialogue*, Balfour argues that even if women's rights and gender equality considerations have increased in the EU's relations with its Southern neighbours, "such priorities cannot be evidenced from political and diplomatic relations, revealing a gap between bottom-up approaches based on assistance and a political and diplomatic exercise of conditionality".<sup>60</sup> The EU has only been ready to test its political and diplomatic

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<sup>58</sup> Council of the European Union, "Politique européenne de voisinage : Projet de plan d'action Maroc pour la mise en oeuvre du statut avance (2013-2017)", 9 December 2013, retrieved 14 April 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/action\\_plans/morocco\\_enp\\_ap\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/action_plans/morocco_enp_ap_final_en.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", *op. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

relations and publicly condemn the partner countries in individual cases of human rights abuse.<sup>61</sup> The fact that the Moroccan women's rights movement that started out in the 1960s is growing stronger and starting to have a real impact on the ground does not yet seem to have been able to incite change on the high level of political dialogue.<sup>62</sup> In addition to the faltering political dialogue in the Southern Mediterranean, in 2006 and 2009, two ministerial conferences have been held in the EMP framework called 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society'.<sup>63</sup> These have perhaps helped to draw more attention to women's rights where the political dialogue has been unable to do so.

Regarding the second tool for implementation, *gender mainstreaming*, the EU has declared that the issue of gender inequality can only be solved if all social, political and economic levels are taken into account.<sup>64</sup> In spite of this declaratory commitment, gender mainstreaming has not been consistently applied. Women's economic rights seem to be given priority in the EMP and in Morocco. It has been suggested that the EU "fails to appreciate that women already participate extensively in their countries' economies. In addition, micro-enterprises often target women entrepreneurs as their beneficiaries, who are not necessarily the neediest women."<sup>65</sup> The Country Strategy Paper also barely mentions gender mainstreaming.<sup>66</sup>

As one of the priorities agreed upon by the EU and Morocco for channelling most of the funds is good governance and human rights<sup>67</sup>, the EU has been comparatively active putting into place *specific actions* that relate to women and gender. At present, the EU's main regional programme aimed at supporting women's rights in the Southern Neighbourhood is the 'Spring Forward for Women' programme that was

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> F. Sadiqi & M. Ennaji, "Feminization of Public Space: Women's Activism, the Family Law, and Social Change in Morocco", published in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2006, retrieved 19 April 2015, <http://eyas.free.fr/AMEWS%20Article.pdf>, p. 16-18.; European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>63</sup> European Union External Action Service, "Euromed and Women", retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/euromed/women/index_en.htm).

<sup>64</sup> European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", *op. cit.*, p.16.

<sup>65</sup> Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

set up in 2012.<sup>68</sup> This programme focuses on political and economic rights of women.<sup>69</sup> There are also some other grants, for example some European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights micro-projects<sup>70</sup> but they are rather marginal in terms of scope and budget. In addition to these EU programmes, the UfM also has several ongoing projects on promoting women.<sup>71</sup> Outside the regional framework, the EU is engaged in numerous bilateral projects with Morocco, including several projects relating to women's rights and gender equality. For example, the EU has supported the *Plan Gouvernemental pour l'égalité* 2012-2016 and assisted the *Agence de Développement Social* that is under the supervision of the *Ministère du Développement Social* with projects whose goal is to promote the autonomy of women involved in the production of argan oil.<sup>72</sup> However, it is important to remember that the Strategy Paper states that the EU's projects that receive most financial contributions have to be compatible with the reforms envisaged by the government of Morocco.<sup>73</sup>

To conclude, the case study on Morocco paints a mixed picture. It has been suggested in the academic literature that the emphasis on women's rights and gender equality has been a specific theme that sets the EU's policy towards the Mediterranean apart from other regions.<sup>74</sup> The findings of this chapter somewhat contradict this claim. The main institutional documents, the Barcelona Declaration and the Association Agreement, give very little attention to the role of women. In light of this, it is not surprising that women's rights and gender equality issues have been absent from political dialogue, and gender mainstreaming has been limited to a few fields. Nevertheless, there are also positive developments. There have been a

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<sup>68</sup> European Neighbourhood Info Centre, "Regional Cooperation in the Neighbourhood", retrieved 22 April 2015, <http://www.enpi-info.eu/files/publications/Download%20the%20publication.pdf>, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> European Neighbourhood Info Centre, "Spring forward for women", retrieved 22 April 2015, [http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=475&id\\_type=10](http://www.enpi-info.eu/mainmed.php?id=475&id_type=10).

<sup>70</sup> K. Kausch, "How serious is the EU about supporting democracy and human rights in Morocco?", *ECFR Working Paper*, [http://fride.org/download/WP\\_Democracy-Morocco\\_ENG\\_may08.pdf](http://fride.org/download/WP_Democracy-Morocco_ENG_may08.pdf) Retrieved 17 February 2015, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> Union for the Mediterranean, "Developing Women Empowerment", 18 March 2013, retrieved 22 April 2015, <http://ufmsecretariat.org/developing-women-empowerment>; Union for the Mediterranean, "Skills for Success – Employability Skills for Women", 10 October 2012, retrieved 22 April 2015, <http://ufmsecretariat.org/skills-for-success-employability-skills-for-women>.

<sup>72</sup> Délégation de l'Union européenne auprès du Royaume du Maroc, "Traité d'union", La Newsletter de la Délégation de l'Union européenne auprès du Royaume du Maroc, Hiver 2013, No. 200.

<sup>73</sup> European Commission, "Morocco: Strategy Paper 2007-2013", op. cit., p. 20-21.

<sup>74</sup> Balfour, op. cit., p. 125.

number of small-scale projects that take the gender dimension into account. Moreover, the current Action Plan contains a number of references to women and gender.

## **Comparative assessment: similarities and differences between the cases of Senegal and Morocco**

There are many similarities and differences between the two regional policies both with regard to the institutional framework and the implementation. In this section the convergences and divergences are scrutinised in more detail. The aim is to assess the two cases in a comparative manner, and to show that it is difficult to determine outright which regional framework has been more successful overall in terms of women's rights and gender equality because of the number of factors that influence policy formulation and execution in these regions.

### *Similarities in the institutional framework and implementation*

#### The institutional framework

Regarding similarities in the institutional framework, the first thing that stands out is that the EU's approach to women's rights and gender equality has developed over time in its relations both with the ACP and EMP partners. For the Cotonou framework, the fact that the agreement is revised every five years allows for a certain flexibility<sup>75</sup>, and the number of references to women's rights and needs has increased since the year 2000. For the EMP, it can be said that while the institutional framework with all its different constituent parts may be complex, it does allow for fairly quick improvements too. This can be seen especially in the case of Morocco, where women's rights and gender equality were marginal in the Barcelona Declaration and the Association Agreement, but have started to gain more ground in the later Presidency Conclusions of the Barcelona Summit and the APs. In both regional frameworks, it seems that the way for more attention to women's rights and needs is being paved by consecutive revisions.

Another similarity that stands out slightly less in the two case study chapters but that creates an important underlying dynamic in the institutional frameworks, not least as it could perhaps put positive future developments in the institutional frameworks at risk, is that the EU is increasingly pursuing a trade liberalisation policy both with the ACP and EMP states. Particularly the growing markets in the Southern Mediterranean are becoming economically attractive to the EU. The Cotonou Agreement envisages the creation of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with regional ACP

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<sup>75</sup> Mackie, *op. cit.*, pp. 144, 154.

groupings and in its Southern neighbourhood, and the EU has initiated Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) that broaden the scope of the trade provisions of the AAs. The EU has started or finished EPA negotiations with most of the ACP regional groups<sup>76</sup>, DCFTA negotiations with Morocco, and is set to start them with Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia soon.<sup>77</sup> Even though the effects of this policy cannot be discerned yet, Arts suggests that there are “indications that the currently negotiated ACP-EU Economic Partnership Agreements may have rather serious negative effects on gender and poverty problems”<sup>78</sup>. Studies show that the effects of the implementation of the free trade policy can be adverse especially in the agricultural sector, where women’s opportunities for employment and income are largely concentrated in the ACP countries.<sup>79</sup> In other words, there is a risk that the costs of speedy economic liberalisation will hit women particularly.<sup>80</sup>

### Implementation

The most obvious similarity when it comes to the EU’s attempts to implement the commitments made to women’s rights in the provisions of the Cotonou Agreement and in the EMP framework is that they have not been fully matched in practice. While there have been some concrete attempts, as a whole the actions taken in practice have not reached the declaratory objectives in either of the two regions. This finding is in line with the previously existing literature on the topic.<sup>81</sup> Political dialogue does not appear to have led to concrete achievements yet. In the cases of Senegal and Morocco, particularly the commitment to gender mainstreaming has lagged behind despite it being codified in almost all the institutional reference documents. Furthermore, in its specific projects, the EU has placed emphasis on projects that have to do with economic and sometimes political rights, leaving aside addressing “traditional concerns of the private sphere”, that is, unequal relations in

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<sup>76</sup> European Commission, “Overview of EPA negotiations, Updated March 2015”, retrieved 24 April 2015, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc\\_144912.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/september/tradoc_144912.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> European Commission, Directorate General European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, “EU response to the Arab Spring”, retrieved 24 April 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/southern-neighbourhood/arab-spring/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/southern-neighbourhood/arab-spring/index_en.htm).

<sup>78</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>79</sup> APRODEV, “EPAs – What’s in it for Women? A Gender Based Impact Study on ‘Women in Zimbabwe: Issues in Future Trade Negotiations with the EU’”, Brussels, November 2002, retrieved 18 October 2015, <http://aprodev.eu/files/Trade/EPAsWomen.pdf>, p. 27.

<sup>80</sup> Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>81</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

the home and in the family, which take centre stage in the lives of so many women.<sup>82</sup>

Another similar challenge faced by the EU in the implementation of women's rights and gender equality policies in the two frameworks which creates a very important dynamic is the "societal understanding of gender roles"<sup>83</sup>. In both Senegal and Morocco traditions and religion have a very important role in society. This makes the interaction between the women's rights and gender equality discourse on the one hand and the local norms rooted in Islam on the other hand complicated and slows down the potential progress of EU initiatives.<sup>84</sup> When it comes to the EU's interaction with the local context, it has been suggested that in its efforts to promote democracy and human rights it "shows little sensitivity for national and local cultures and values".<sup>85</sup> However, in an interview conducted with a Commission official in charge of regional gender equality projects, it became apparent that the staff are well aware of the cultures and values in these regions. The interviewee noted that when looking for guidance to deal with culture and religion in the EU's regional programmes for women's rights and gender equality, the EU officials have to rely on guidelines on gender equality, such as the GAP, since no EU *strategy* for addressing gender issues in Muslim countries exists. The officials try to overcome this problem in the programme design phase by involving local experts in the preparatory work. For instance, when the 'Spring Forward for Women' programme was being formulated, one of the key messages from the Arab experts was that gender equality remains "a very delicate topic" and women's rights issues are often better approached by labelling them as general human rights problems. According to the EU official, they know well that "[they] [EU staff] cannot just go there and say that women and men are equal" because both men and women would be found disagreeing.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> B. Starker, "Women: Women's Rights", in D. P. Forsythe (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, Vol. 5, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 343.

<sup>83</sup> K. Žvan Elliott, "Morocco and its Women's Rights Struggle: A Failure to Live Up to Its Progressive Image", *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2014, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with an official, EU Delegation to Senegal, by email, 6 May 2015.

<sup>85</sup> T. A. Börzel & T. Risse, "One Size Fits All! EU Policies for the Promotion of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law", Workshop on Democracy Promotion, Stanford University, 27 April 2005, retrieved 24 April 2015, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with an official, Directorate General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Brussels, 17 March 2015.

### *Differences in the institutional framework and implementation*

#### The institutional framework

To begin with the most obvious difference in the institutional frameworks, women's rights and gender equality are more deeply embedded in the Cotonou Agreement, the legal basis for EU-ACP cooperation, than in the Barcelona Declaration, the founding document of EU-Southern Mediterranean cooperation. The Cotonou Agreement contains a separate article entirely devoted to women as well as a number of references in other articles. Even though one might expect that due to the general nature of EU-ACP relations, economic rights would be the main focus of the Cotonou Agreement, the breadth of rights promoted is in fact not limited to the economic sphere. This kind of commitment to women's rights and gender equality in a formal treaty is, as Arts puts it, "path breaking".<sup>87</sup> By contrast, the Barcelona Declaration only contains a brief mention of the role of women in economic development. The EU-Morocco AA is no more substantial than the Barcelona Declaration in this regard. The EU-Morocco AA, like the other AAs signed with the rest of the Southern Mediterranean partners, reiterates the notion included in the Barcelona Declaration that concerns women's role in economic development, but does not contain references to women in the other two of the so-called baskets of cooperation, the political and security basket, and the social and cultural basket.

In addition to this obvious difference in the legal provisions on women's rights, another difference in the institutional framework stands out in the two cases discussed above. Even though this difference is more general in nature, it also has profound implications for coherent policy formulation for women's rights and gender equality. This difference is the design of the institutional framework. In the Cotonou Agreement, 78 ACP states are signatories to one single overarching agreement. Even with the planned introduction of EPAs with newly introduced regional groupings, the basis of the EU-ACP relations is more straightforward than for the EU-Southern Mediterranean relations. As was shown in the case study section on Morocco, the complexity of the institutional framework for the EU's relations with its Southern neighbours took off with the creation of the ENP in 2004. The ENP covers a different set of countries than the EMP and it relies on a more differentiated, bilateral

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<sup>87</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

approach.<sup>88</sup> Leaving aside the discussion of the ENP's virtues and vices, it suffices here to say that the EU has made the "terms of the cooperation"<sup>89</sup> clearer with the ACP states that are signatories to the Cotonou Agreement than with its Southern Mediterranean neighbours. Because of the clear terms of cooperation and more accessible and consistent women's rights and gender equality objectives, one might assume that the actual implementation of women's rights policies and projects would work more efficiently in the Cotonou countries too. However, this is not necessarily the case, as the next section on the differences in the implementation of the women's rights and gender equality commitment argues.

### Implementation

Apart from the observation that gender mainstreaming is lagging behind in both regions, there are clear differences in the EU's preferred method for implementation. The EU's political dialogue with the ACP states is more structured and far-reaching than with the EMP countries. With Senegal, the EU has even started a structured dialogue on gender, whereas with Morocco the political dialogue does not seem to be a priority at the moment and the EU seems mainly to focus on funding some small-scale projects that incorporate gender aspects. It can of course be debated which of these two approaches actually makes a bigger difference for women's lives in these two countries. Projects that empower women may have a quicker effect, but they may prove limited in the longer term if the policies of the country do not change and abolish the overall structures of discrimination and inequality. Nevertheless, in terms of the preferred method of implementation, the EU has been more insistent and consequential towards Senegal than towards Morocco.

These differences in the EU's preferred method for implementation of its women's rights policy appear to relate to the role security considerations play in the two regional frameworks discussed in this paper. Security considerations have been particularly imperative in the EU's relations with the Southern Mediterranean states since 9/11.<sup>90</sup> After 9/11, stability rather than democratisation or improving human rights became the main EU goal in the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East. In its quest for regional stability, the EU chose to support regimes that were far from

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<sup>88</sup> D. Marchesi, "From EMP to ENP: Saving the Southern Periphery from Marginalisation" in D. Mahncke & S. Gstöhl (eds.), *Europe's Near Abroad: Promises and Prospects of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy*, Brussels, P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2008, p. 206.

<sup>89</sup> Arts, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>90</sup> Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

democratic instead of publicly calling for changes towards more democratic forms of governance. More recently, the Arab Spring that has shaken the region could be said to have revealed the same logic behind EU policy. Even though the Arab Spring suggests that many citizens are calling for democracy and respect for their rights, the instability that has followed the popular uprisings has made sure that the EU remains more concerned about its security on its Southern brink. This preoccupation with stability undoubtedly goes a long way in explaining the unambitious character of the EU's gender policy towards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership countries. As Chorou and Orbie argue, "the promotion of women's rights may be seen as an obstacle to maintain[ing] stable relations with Southern governments."<sup>91</sup> By contrast, as the interests of the EU might not be quite as wide-ranging in the ACP states, the EU has been more enthused and outspoken about women's rights and gender equality.<sup>92</sup> When comparing Senegal and Morocco, this difference is evident. This observation does confirm the argument that has been put forth by some, that on the social change-stability range stability seems a greater occupation of the EU in the EMP than in the ACP countries and so, by extension, implementation on social issues such as women's rights is carried out less in the EMP than in the EU's relations with other regions.<sup>93</sup> It should be noted though that not in all ACP states security considerations get little attention from the EU. For instance, countries such as Niger and Mali have been deeply affected by the spill-over of recent instability from Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.<sup>94</sup>

## Conclusion

The EU does not pursue its goal of promoting women's rights and gender equality in its external relations in a uniform manner, meaning that important lessons can be learnt from the varying degrees of success of the different regional policies. Overall, the EU seems to have been more successful in institutionalising and operationalising its women's rights and gender equality commitment in its relations with Senegal than with Morocco. Because women's rights are more deeply embedded in the institutional framework for EU-ACP relations and because the EU has aimed at

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>92</sup> Chorou 2003, p. 35, cited in Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 69-70.

<sup>93</sup> Balfour, *op. cit.*, p. 127; Orbie, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>94</sup> C. Zulaika, "State of Play: The EU, the African Parties to the Cotonou Agreement and the ENP" in S. Gstöhl & E. Lannon (eds.), *Neighbours of the European Union's Neighbours: Diplomatic and Geopolitical Dimensions beyond the European Neighbourhood Policy*, Farnham & Burlington, Ashgate, 2014, p. 32.

implementing women's rights on a higher level, it has been slightly more influential on the ground in Senegal.

Based solely on the findings of these two case studies, it is difficult to make any general recommendations. Nonetheless, the comparison shows a gap between the objectives on paper and what the EU is able to do in practice. This is of course not a problem that only exists in the field of women's rights promotion specifically, but one that is true of the EU's human rights and democratisation policies in general. Perhaps this finding is linked with what has been observed about the EU in the world by some scholars and EU actors themselves, namely that the EU's ability to influence the policies of its partner countries is diminishing especially with regard to human rights and democracy.<sup>95</sup>

However, even though it has been shown that many of the different provisions have not been realised, it is vital that the EU continues its work in this field. Every small step towards its partner countries complying with the international standards and ensuring equal rights is important.

So to conclude, based on the comparison, what can be learnt from these cases for other cases of the EU's women's rights and gender equality promotion?

- Regarding the institutional framework, the first main lesson drawn from the comparison is the importance of making the terms of cooperation clear and grounding the commitment to women's rights and gender equality in the institutional basis for regional cooperation. While the Cotonou Agreement could be said to be exemplary of this, the AA as the legal basis for EU-Morocco cooperation only contains one brief reference to women and does not mention gender equality. Therefore, it does not encourage very ambitious women's rights initiatives from the EU, nor is it up to date with the growing engagement of local women's rights activists. Be it in development cooperation, neighbourhood policy or elsewhere, when the EU negotiates new partnership agreements or updates old agreements, to really make women's rights and gender equality a core aspect in the EU's policy it should incorporate an equally gender-sensitive approach like the Cotonou Agreement.

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<sup>95</sup> European Commission, Directorate General for External Policies, op. cit., p. 5; R. Youngs, *The EU's Role in World Politics: A Retreat from Liberal Internationalism*, Abingdon & New York, Routledge, 2010, p. 78.

- The second main lesson from the comparison relates to implementation, namely political dialogue. The EU has been able to start a structured dialogue on gender in Senegal, showing that it is able to accommodate local actors and their values in the dialogue. The lessons learnt from the structured dialogue could be useful for the EMP. Making use of them would also help build bridges between the two external policy frameworks for Africa, which in turn would help bring about a more uniform approach to the region as a whole. The lessons learnt from the political dialogue could also be useful for other regions as best practices for EU policy in this field.
- The third main lesson that can be drawn from the comparison, also relating to implementation, is that the EU's specific projects can be quite successful, as shown by the case of Morocco. Where political dialogue on gender is not yet possible, specific projects allow the EU to support women's empowerment in a less direct way. To facilitate immediate improvements for women and raise awareness of their rights, the EU should ideally increase the number of its specific projects and funding. This would also increase positive visibility of the EU in the partner countries. However, it is important to note that such a locally targeted bottom-up approach is overall unlikely to be as effective as a permanent high-level political dialogue that deals with legislation and policy-making, which are key to realising the potential of women and ensuring that their rights are respected across the country and the region.

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