

Parliamentary Projects Support Division

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Activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) organised in the framework of the South Programme III¹ in 2018

SUMMARY REPORT

*Prepared by the Secretariat of the
Parliamentary Project Support Division of the PACE*

Ensuring Sustainable Democratic Governance and Human Rights in the Southern Mediterranean

Funded
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EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

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I. **Parliamentary dimension of the South Programme III (2018-2020)**

After phases I and II of the South Program (see synthesis report of activities 2012-2017 PPSD (2018) 05 rev.: , <http://www.assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/APCE/pdf/PPSD/2018/PPSD-2018-05-EN.pdf>), joint program with the European Union (EU), funded by the EU and by the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) also participated in the implementation of the third phase of this project in 2018, South Programme III "Ensuring the sustainability of democratic governance and human rights in the southern Mediterranean" (Component 6 of the program).

The added value of PACE activities lies in its recognized expertise in the field of democracy and democratic institutions, but also in the fields of competence of its committees and members: political questions, human rights, social rights, culture and the media, issues relating to migration, equality and non-discrimination. This expertise can be shared among peers with parliamentarians from national parliaments in order to support them in their parliamentary engagement in the process of reforming national legislations.

The parliamentary dimension of the South Programme III projects focuses on raising awareness among parliamentarians in the region and on promoting the role of national parliaments in strengthening democracy, human rights and the fight against discrimination in their country through legislative reform and political dialogue.

It should be recalled that the Assembly has strengthened its relations with the Algerian, Jordanian, Moroccan and Tunisian parliaments and the Palestinian National Council following the adoption in 2008 of Assembly's resolution 1598 entitled "Strengthening cooperation with the Maghreb countries ". Since then, delegations from parliaments from the southern Mediterranean region have been regularly invited to attend plenary sessions of the Assembly.

In addition, in 2009, PACE created the status of Partnership for Democracy [Resolution 1680 (2009)], institutional cooperation with the parliaments of non-member states of neighbouring regions wishing to benefit from the experience of the Assembly in strengthening democracy, the rule of law and democracy.

The parliaments, partners for democracy to the PACE are: the Parliament of Morocco and the Palestinian National Council, since 2011, and the Parliament of Jordan, since 2016. The partners declare that they share the same values as those defended by the Council of Europe: "pluralist and sexist parity - democracy based on the rule of law, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" and that they will reform their national legislation to bring it into conformity to Council of Europe's standards. Every two years, PACE draws up an evaluation report for each partner for democracy, summarizing its achievements and highlighting the improvements to be made.

The existing framework of the partnership for democracy has facilitated the implementation of PACE South Program activities thanks to regular contacts with partner parliaments, who have their delegations in Strasbourg present four times a year, and owing their political commitment and the wish to fulfil the reform processes in their countries, with the assistance of PACE.

As a result, the Assembly has become a platform for wider political dialogue and the centre of effective regional cooperation between the parliaments of the southern Mediterranean and the Middle East and Europe.

II. **Activities of the Parliamentary Assembly in 2018 in the framework of the South Programme III**

Thanks to five regional events (*see the calendar of activities in the appendix*) devoted to two main issues of common interest for the Mediterranean region (MENA countries) and Europe: 1) migration, security and the diasporas and 2) women's rights, a permanent dialogue was opened in 2018 at the political level and parliamentary democracy in the region was consolidated by dialogue with Europe.

Those activities were organised in close co-operation between the Parliamentary Project Support Division of the PACE and the PACE Committees: Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination as well as their networks: Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies and Parliamentary Network on Women free from violence.

1) *Common policy on migration, security and diasporas*

The two regional conferences on migration and diaspora policies (in Geneva (Switzerland) in May and in Kiev (Ukraine) in September) and a conference on security, also linked to migration issues (Dubrovnik (Croatia) in November), generated a wide response and brought together around 250 participants, including parliamentarians and NGOs from at least four to five countries in the Southern Mediterranean and Near East region, mainly Morocco, Jordan and Palestine, but also Algeria, Lebanon and Tunisia.

The countries of the Southern Mediterranean region, of which large diaspora communities reside in Europe, were informed about the existence of numerous laws and initiatives aimed at protecting rights and ensuring successful integration of migrants in Europe led by national and local governments but also by civil society. They also were able to share good practices from European countries in order to be able to integrate and gradually implement all the laws relating to democracy, human rights and non-discrimination, in compliance with standards and policies of the Council of Europe, including more inclusive policies for migrants and diasporas.

These events have also enabled the countries of the region and the European parliaments to strengthen their role in the region's democratic system and to draw the first lines of common legislation on migration and diaspora rights, or at least create a better synergy of different legislations, to ensure more security for migrants and better integration of diasporas.

The discussions also provided an opportunity for European countries to change their attitude towards migrants and diasporas, allowing them to discover their commitment and their real contribution to the commercial, economic and cultural life of their communities in the host countries.

A great number of civil society representatives participating in the conferences presented their activities and confirmed their willingness to cooperate with local governments. They also took the opportunity to point out certain integration difficulties and the lack of support from their communities and made a number of requests, such as the need for a specific policy on the rights of diasporas and their participation in political and economic life of the host country.

In its final declaration of the annual Diaspora Forum in Geneva, the Diaspora Parliamentary Network recommended that the governments of the host countries of the migrant communities take concrete measures to create an enabling environment to the development of the potential of the diaspora in as contributors to development. The aim is to allow them civic participation at local level and contribute to the socio-economic development of their local communities, also to detect and prevent cases of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against migrants. Joint activities aimed at promoting mutual respect, social cohesion and the enhancement of cultural diversity must be supported.

On the other hand, it also invites the governments of the countries of origin of the diaspora and transnational communities to create the conditions necessary for the contribution of the diaspora to their countries and their communities of origin by facilitating their mobility and their giving access to dual citizenship, the right to vote and the right to property.

2) Progress towards legislation that protects the rights of women

With regard to the two conferences on the rights of women, the deputies of the countries of the Southern Mediterranean region were able to meet with deputies of the neighbouring countries and of the member states of the Council of Europe in order to exchange good practices concerning Council of Europe standards on non-discrimination and protection of women's rights, in order to become a stakeholder in the progress made in the national legislations of the countries of this region.

In Rabat, in July, the main theme of the conference was how to progress on the path of equality with regard to the participation of women in public and political life, in particular in the electoral system, political parties and representation in Parliament. PACE deputies and representatives of the Venice Commission presented the existing mechanisms to promote the representation of women, such as quotas, seats reserved for women, alternate lists, compulsory quotas on electoral lists as well as their practice in various European countries, which was very useful for the targeted countries.

In Paris in September, discussions on the Istanbul Convention and its implementation were of great interest to Moroccan and Jordanian MPs, as new legislation on the protection of women against violence had recently been discussed and passed in Morocco and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2017 had introduced new provisions to protect the family and encourage reporting of domestic violence in Jordan. In Palestine, there is no such specific legislation.

A process of strengthening gender equality is underway in the Mediterranean neighbourhood with various forms, such as the revision of constitutions (Morocco, Algeria), organic laws and positive quotas (for example, 15 to 21% of women should appear on the lists of candidates for the post of president during the legislative elections in Morocco and Algeria). However, despite remarkable progress, it is still possible and desirable to improve their applications and consolidate the achievements in order to strengthen the position of women in these countries and better protect their rights, in particular the right to live without violence.

To conclude, it should be emphasized that the presence of more than 50 representatives of civil society at the five activities and their active participation in the discussions was crucial. The discussions demonstrated the presence on the ground of associations and NGOs from different European countries and the MENA region representing migrants, diasporas and women and their significant involvement in political, social and cultural life and in the struggle for their rights.

Final Calendar of activities Implemented by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2018

In the framework of the South Programme III “Ensuring Sustainable Democratic Governance and Human Rights in the Southern Mediterranean”

	Date	Activity	Place	Number of participants
1.	18 May 2018	Regional Parliamentary Forum “Diasporas as partners for development in a globalised world”, with the participation of MPs from the Southern Mediterranean Region, organised in co-operation with the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the PACE and the Union of Nations in Geneva <i>Final Programme PPSD (2018) 08</i>	GENEVA (Switzerland) Headquarter of the Union of Nations	116
2.	5 July 2018	“Regional Parliamentary Conference on women in politics: how to progress towards equality?”, with the participation of MPs from the Parliaments of the Southern Mediterranean Region, organised in co-operation with the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the PACE <i>Final Programme PPSD (2018) 11</i>	RABAT (Morocco) Parliament of Morocco	58
3.	20 September 2018	“Regional Parliamentary Conference on legislations and policies on violence against women: legislative advances and international standards in Southern Mediterranean countries”, with the participation of MPs from the Parliaments of the Southern Mediterranean Region, organised in co-operation with the PACE Parliamentary Network “Women free from violence” <i>Final Programme PPSD (2018) 12</i>	PARIS (France)	40
4.	24 September 2018	Regional Parliamentary Conference “Platform for co-operation policies: role of diaspora associations and synergies with public authorities”, with the participation of MPs from the Parliament of the Southern Mediterranean Region, organised in co-operation with the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the PACE <i>Final Programme PPSD (2018) 14</i>	KYIV (Ukraine)	71
5.	6 November 2018	Parliamentary Conference on “Building democratic security in the Mediterranean: common challenges, shared responsibility”, with the participation of MPs from the Parliaments of the Southern Mediterranean Region, organised in co-operation with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the PACE <i>Final Programme AS/Pol/AHD (2018) 01</i>	DUBROVNIK (Croatia)	60
			TOTAL	345