

EuroMed Justice Programme

Seminar on “*Judicial Systems I*” (Athens, 12-15 February 2007)

Final Declaration

The regional seminar about “*Judicial Systems I*”, first seminar organised under topic 5 on “Management and administration of justice: management of procedures, computerisation” of the EuroMed Justice Programme within the context of the Euro-Mediterranean policy of the European Union (MEDA Programme of the European Commission (EC) -EuropeAid Co-operation Office), was held in Athens on 12-15 February 2007. The participants were members of the delegations of the following Mediterranean Partners (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Turkey) and experts from the following EU Member States (Belgium, France, Greece and Spain). Moreover, the present seminar has brought together representatives from the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The participants(*) are of the opinion that:

in conformity with:

1. The guiding principles of the EuroMed Justice Programme, i.e. :
 - a. The strengthening of cooperation among Euro-Mediterranean Partners in the field of justice;
 - b. The promotion of an exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices;
 - c. The creation of mechanisms allowing for the practical implementation of this cooperation through, for instance, the development of a Euro-Mediterranean network in the field of judicial cooperation;
2. The operational conclusions of the opening conference of the EuroMed Justice Programme held in Brussels on 20 December 2004;
3. The operational conclusions of the preparatory meeting of topic 5 of the Programme held in Athens on 10-11 July 2006.

They acknowledge that this seminar has allowed them:

- To examine, over a period of 4 days, the diversity of the different judicial systems:

- by analysing the situation in the EU Member States and Mediterranean Partners, more concretely the judicial systems in France, Turkey, Greece and Lebanon;
 - by taking into account the experience of international organisations like the Council of Europe and the OSCE in assessing and supporting judicial legal systems in order to improve them and find best practices to implement;
 - by getting a better insight into the settlement of a judicial system by the United Nations in a post-conflict area like in the case of Kosovo.
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- To point out the respect of human rights and the rule of law as the guiding principles to be followed to achieve a fair judicial system;
 - To study how each judicial system guarantees Human Rights' respect and the rule of law, bearing in mind its traditional, cultural and religious peculiarities;
 - To analyse the independence of the judiciary and the judge as an essential guarantee for the implementation of justice;
 - To agree on the need to improve efficiency of justice by updating means and tools used to implement justice;
 - To be aware of the importance of exchanging practices and mutual knowledge as a cornerstone for understanding and cooperating in the field of justice and to multiply this exchange of ideas and experiences for a better optimisation of a compatible approach by cooperating together in mutual trust, trying to find the best possible practices while respecting the specificities of each legal judicial system;
 - To take into account the necessity of further promoting a climate of mutual trust so that a fruitful international judicial cooperation can be developed;
 - To get a better insight into essential and fundamental values for a successful judicial system by analysing the issue through different angles in order to get a more complete picture by means of an exchange of practices and experience, working groups, a round table and plenary sessions;
 - To establish contacts among participants attending the seminar in order to promote cooperation among institutions of different countries working in the field of justice;
 - To receive the basic legal documentation – on paper and on CD-Rom- as support to deepen the topics dealt with by this seminar;
 - To keep abreast of the current situation and future developments in each Mediterranean Partner regarding the topic covered by this seminar.

The participants took note of the upcoming dissemination of this final declaration among the European Commission Directorates-General concerned, the EU Member States and the Mediterranean Partners.

Read and approved by all the participants in the seminar.

Athens, 15 February 2007

(*) See list in annex