

September 2013

Editorial



Welcome to the first edition of the South Programme Newsletter. The aim of this quarterly Newsletter is to present main activities and results of the European Union (EU) – Council of Europe (CoE) joint programme, “Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighbourhood”, the so-called South Programme.

In January 2012 EU Commissioner Štefan Füle and CoE Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland launched the South Programme which aims to facilitate the transition to democracy depending on progress achieved by the partner country.

This is ensured by making available the expertise and relevant tools of the CoE. The success of this approach has been demonstrated by the CoE’s contribution to democratic changes in several of its member states.

The close partnership established with the EU is for the benefit of partner countries. I am convinced that it is of utmost importance that our joint endeavours ultimately benefit the citizens of partner countries. For example, we help make the judicial system more efficient and transparent, which is key to ensuring access to the judiciary of all categories of the population. We are also working on the promotion of CoE’s standards to establish the basis for a common legal space with the European continent. Also, the creation of Schools of Political Studies in Tunis and in Rabat is an important step to train future generations on common democratic values.

The demand-driven approach is crucial for achieving tangible results as it ensures a strong ownership by partner countries. Morocco and Tunisia are forerunners but other countries of the region are actively involved in regional activities of the programme.

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

FOCUS ON ACTIVITIES OF THE PROGRAMME

A delegation of the Schools of Political Studies of Tunis and Rabat on training in Strasbourg



A group of students of the Schools of Political Studies of Tunis and Rabat attended the 44th Annual Study Session in International and Comparative Law

of Human Rights, organised by the International Institute of Human Rights (IIDH) in Strasbourg, from 8-26 July 2013.

Both the South Programme and the CoE’s programme of the Schools of Political Studies have sponsored the participation of this group. In addition to the study session at the IIDH, the representatives of the two Schools also participated in a two-day study visit to the CoE, with a focus on the democratic developments and the Organisation’s cooperation with Southern Mediterranean countries.

Launching of the assessment of the anti-corruption framework in Morocco



The CoE launched on 10 July 2013, in Rabat, the process of assessment of the legal and institutional anti-corruption framework of Morocco.

This process is based on the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) methodology, and is conducted by a team of experts designated by both the CoE and the Moroccan authorities.

A draft assessment report will be eventually discussed with the Instance Centrale de Prévention de la Corruption (ICPC), the other competent public institutions as well as with civil society representatives.

The results of this assessment will enable to fine-tune the activities in the area of fight against corruption and money laundering, which will be carried out during the second phase of implementation of the South Programme.

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Towards a common legal area with the European continent



The Deputy Secretary General of the CoE, Mrs Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, officially opened in Strasbourg an introductory regional seminar on Conventions and Partial Agreements of the CoE. This event takes place within the framework of the South Programme on 1 July 2013: representatives from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Jordan attended. The main purpose of this event was to present in detail accession procedures to CoE Conventions and Partial Agreements by non-member States.

According to the needs expressed by partner countries, other action will be organised within the framework of the South Programme, with the aim to assist these countries to progressively join the common legal area with the European continent.

Tunisia: strengthening of co-operation with the judicial authorities

A group of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) experts visited Tunisia from 5 to 7 June 2013.



The experts visited the regional and cantonal courts of Zaghouan to study their functioning and, in particular, to examine the processing of cases and the file management system. Furthermore, they pursued their activities with the CEPEJ pilot courts, notably the Regional court of Tunis (TPI) and the Court of Cassation. They met members of the General Inspectorate to examine more closely the judicial data provided by the Tunisian authorities, as well as the Higher Institute of Magistrates.

Finally a meeting took place with the newly appointed Minister of Justice of Tunisia, Mr Nadhir Ben Ammou.

Morocco: regional meeting on the drafting of constitutions

The Venice Commission and the Moroccan Association of Constitutional Law organised the 2nd Intercultural Workshop on Democracy on “The new constitutionalism in the Arab world: the process of constitution making in a changing environment” (Marrakech, 14-15 May 2013).



This activity brought together constitution drafters from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. They exchanged their experiences in the field of constitutional reform. Among other issues, they compared the approaches used in launching the revision of their respective Constitutions, procedures for their elaboration and adoption and implementation of the constitutional provisions through new legislations.

This seminar was organised in the framework of the South Programme and also relied on a financial contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and Hanns - Seidel Foundation.

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Morocco: Seminar on the popular legislative initiative



The Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (PACE), upon invitation of the Moroccan Parliament, organised a seminar on the popular legislative initiative (Rabat, 15 May 2013).

The seminar allowed for an exchange of views between Moroccan parliamentarians and parliamentarians from CoE's member States on the popular legislative initiative, focusing, in particular, on different European legal models and practices and their relevance to the Moroccan Parliament.

Key upcoming events

30 OCTOBER 2013 Rabat, Morocco	SEMINAR <i>Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE</i> "Strengthening women's participation in the political life"
6 - 7 NOVEMBER 2013 Lisbon, Portugal	LISBON FORUM <i>Noth-South Centre</i> "Valuing civil society as actor of governance: Perspectives for the South Mediterranean"
8 NOVEMBER 2013 Lisbon, Portugal	INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE <i>Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE</i> "Political changes in the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East: role for representative institutions"
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2013 (date to be confirmed) Tunisia	REGIONAL SEMINAR <i>Schools of Political Studies</i>

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About the EU-CoE joint programme "Strengthening democratic reform in the southern Neighbourhood" (South Programme)

The aim of the South Programme, launched in January 2012, is to support the political and democratic reform process in the countries of the CoE's Southern neighbourhood, in line with European and international standards and on the basis of a targeted, demand-driven approach. The main areas of the program are: judicial reform, fight against corruption, promoting human rights and democratic values. The programme's budget amounts to 4.8 million € over three years (2012-2014).

On-going activities are directed primarily to Morocco and Tunisia, but the program is open to other partner countries and territories under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI): Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and the Palestinian National Authority, and some of which are actively involved in the South Programme mainly through regional activities.

This joint program is part of the broader framework of initiatives undertaken by the two Organisations to promote democracy and human rights in the countries of the Southern Mediterranean, including the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) regarding the EU and the Policy of the CoE towards neighbouring regions.

For more information, please visit the South Programme's website: <http://south-programme-eu.coe.int>.

[†]The EU-Syria bilateral cooperation has been suspended since May 2012.

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