

**GREETING from the Vice President of the ESC  
Mr. Nikolaos Skorinis**

**TRESMED 4**

September 10-11 2012  
CEDEFOP, Thessaloniki

Esteemed ladies, esteemed gentlemen,

With great pleasure we welcome you to the city of Thessaloniki, the capital of Macedonia. A city which has significant advantages because of its geographical and strategic location in the region and which, despite the crisis, demonstrates dynamism.

We welcome you to this event, in the form of a seminar, which focuses on the issue of women's position in the societies of the Mediterranean countries, at a place that is a major European institution for training and information, the CEDEFOP, which offered from the first moment to provide its facilities and equipment free of charge, in order to carry out our event, and to which we would like to give special thanks.

I would also like to thank the ESC of Spain for the excellent cooperation we had for the co-organisation of this seminar in the framework of TRESMED 4.

I also wish that the workshops that will take place during these two days, will deepen and enrich our common concern for the involved issues arising from the participation of women in the labor market, equal opportunities in education, social protection, the fight against discrimination, participation in social consultation and their presence in the institutions and instruments of society and civil society.

Finally, allow me to ask a basic question which, in my opinion, is at the core of the debate in our countries regarding women's issues. It is **the issue of "institutional environment"** defined by the customs, the practices, the habits, the institutional framework and the financial affairs of each country and which perhaps - and I am sure about that - affects to a significant degree the way societies perceive diversity, since they were built by men and they have not adequately exploited the developmental resources arising from the potential of their female population. However, very significant steps have been taken, as indicators suggest.

However, in the current difficult conditions experienced by countries such as Greece, in a Europe that is searching for its mark to stand together, when the differences between the North and South **are on the increase** - rapidly - we cannot afford, in my opinion, not to sufficiently exploit the valuable human resources of our societies.

European policies and related financial instruments exist and will continue to exist. Important documents include the *Charter for Women's Rights*, adopted by the European Commission in March 2010, in order to establish equality between men and women, and *the 2010-2015 Strategy of the European Commission for Equality between men and women*.

However, **they are overshadowed** by an economic and political environment which unfortunately makes decisions without consultation with the institutions of civil society and the productive forces, on the basis of accounting calculations.

Thus, lately we see in our country, in the Greece of the memoranda and the troika, that **structures of the welfare state**, relating to women as well, **are being abolished**, which means that in another way, European policies on the participation of women in the labor market or the social "action" are **contradicted in practice**, since, in combination with reducing household

incomes and with the recession, women are driven back into introversion and their traditional, anachronistic role.

So, as a result of these adverse developments, **issues are raised about the quality of democracy**, about who will ultimately decide for our lives and for the future of our children. In practice, issues such as those related to equality and women, are not as important.

But the region has shown during a historic course of millennia that it has the mental, historical and cognitive resources, as well as the conscience to overcome adversity and regenerate stronger.

With this last comment, I wish for a successful conduct of work. Take advantage of the good weather during your free time, in order to see the sights of the city from the seaside to the Upper Town, to taste the fine cuisine and enjoy the abundant nightlife of the city. After all, you are at home.