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MEDITERRANEAN  
WOMEN MEDIATORS  
NETWORK

# REGIONAL WOMEN MEDIATOR NETWORKS: WHAT ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF EU MEDIATION?



The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) has been present at the EU Mediation Community of Practice Meeting 2020 “Looking into the Future of EU Mediation: What Happens Next?”, held on 15-17 June 2020. On 16 June 2020, a session has been dedicated to the Regional Women Mediator Networks. Irene Fellin, MWMN project coordinator, has moderated the panel entitled “Regional Women Mediator Networks: what role in the future of EU mediation?”<sup>1</sup>

This report summarizes the discussion and outlines the panel’s recommendations.

## Key insights

Networks are not simply a web of remote connections, but instead are a fabric of personal connections and of people who can actively rely on each other. Starting from this basic idea, the participants shared their perspectives on the role of women mediator networks and the added value such networks brought in their career as mediators, facilitators and negotiators.

The contributions included that:

- networks are essential to bring in voices which are not institutionalized and bridge different aspects, as the humanitarian aspects and the political realm;
- networks are also about consolidating personal bonds and relationships;
- networks create a space where women can be seen and heard;
- networks are a space to exchange views and ideas, share experiences on successes and challenges about being women working in the mediation field;
- networks are particularly useful in connecting the different mediation tracks, both at the local and at the global level, and in getting insights from women with diverse backgrounds, bringing different voices and cultures together – it is beneficial for diversity, especially important in this historical moment;

<sup>1</sup> See the official website: <https://www.eupeacemediation.info/preliminary-sessions>.



- regional networks of women mediators are characterized by the copresence of institutional actors and operational partners from civil society; this combination of actors coming both from the institutions and the civil society is reflected in the composition of the networks themselves, it is highly beneficial and it represents a unique chance to gain leverage.

## Challenges

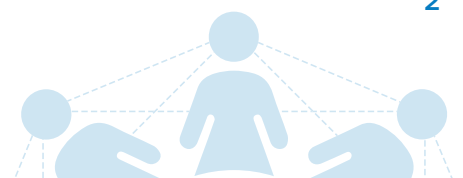
During the conversation, one main challenge arose, namely the need to go from theory to practice and concretely include more women in the processes. In other words, networks aim at transforming the traditional pattern of mediation processes in order to make them more inclusive and representative.

To ensure that women mediators' perspectives are heard and that their presence in negotiation processes actually increases, participants suggested that networks could:

- ensure the networks' visibility, making sure they are felt;
- increase platforms for sharing practices and techniques on how we can achieve that;
- ensure that women mediators are able to be part of the discussion where politics, constitution building, law enforcement, military issues are tackled, through the creation of more fora for women to master the substance of these issues and have the readiness and understanding to be included in these discussions;
- create opportunities after trainings and enhance grassroots opportunities where they are already present on the ground – it is crucial for the members to complement the training aspect with deployment opportunities;
- strengthen relations with institutions and have some presence at the policy level – maybe by producing policy papers and lobbying.

The second point on increasing the focus on the subject matter was particularly debated. The participants suggested that it could indeed be useful to expand capacity building projects on subject matter. However, they underlined that:

- often networks' members already have a significant background of experiences, therefore capacity building workshops could be structured as an opportunity for them to share their experiences and learn from each other (peer-to-peer learning);
- capacity building opportunities should lead to practical opportunities so that participants can apply the skills acquired;
- some capacities may be more needed than others, such as leadership skills since it is not only a question of having the skills, but also to have the confidence to use those skills properly and actively participate (MWMN is in fact focusing on leadership).



## Recommendations for the Networks and for practitioners

- Be persistent.
- Go beyond capacity building and trainings initiatives with the creation and enhancement of opportunities.
  - Support the development of expertise and competence on subject matter, but also the ability to play a meaningful role (delicate balance between developing the skills and assisting in gaining the confidence).
  - Support mentoring initiatives across generations.
  - Take a relevant space at the local level, and don't wait that somebody comes to offer a space; enhance the work of women mediators locally.
  - Know your members and develop list of experts ready to be deployed – create connections and opportunities to highlight their expertise with institutions.

## Recommendations to the EU

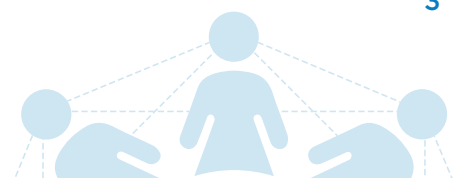
- Avoid duplications and the creation of new mechanism. Instead, the EU could develop policies and create frameworks in support of already existing initiatives, such as the regional women mediator networks.
  - Work both at the HQ level in Brussels and at the delegation level – for example, having the liaison with the networks as part of the mandate of the delegations.
  - Create political opportunities for women to be engaged, especially at the political and local level.
  - Identify what spaces can be given to the networks and which resources can be allocated to them.
  - Facilitate the development of synergies between local institutions engaged with women mediators and peacebuilders on the ground and networks' projects.
  - Tap into networks' capacities while engaging with women mediators and facilitators.

## Examples from other institutions and organizations

OSCE created a toolkit<sup>2</sup> with some steps that can be taken – including a mapping of women initiatives - and engaged with the networks to see whether the recommendations that came up reflected what the networks felt and experienced.

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2 Leena Avonius et al., *Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes: A Toolkit*, Vienna, OSCE, December 2019, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/440735>.





## REGIONAL WOMEN MEDIATOR NETWORKS: WHAT ROLE IN THE FUTURE OF EU MEDIATION?

**Panel discussion within the EU Mediation - Community of Practice 2020, 16 June 2020**

*Convener*

Mediterranean Women Mediators Network – MWMN (Irene Fellin)

*Speakers*

**Anna Cervi**, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Syria Country Director, MWMN

**Sara Cook**, Conflict response specialist, Women Mediators across the Commonwealth

**Vesna Škare-Ožbolt**, Lawyer, Former Minister of Justice of Croatia, National President of the Reconciliation Commission during the war in the Republic of Croatia, MWMN

**Nina Suomalainen**, Justice Rapid Response Director, Nordic Women Mediators Network

*Moderator*

**Irene Fellin**, Head of the MWMN Secretariat and Coordinator of the Global Alliance

