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The precariousness of women's work in the Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole, located in the northeastern semiarid and the need for public policies as a way to mitigate inequalities

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Keywords— Polo Petrolina/Juazeiro, Irrigated fruit growing, Female labor, Precarization, Public politics Equality.

Abstract— The investigative process in this study refers to the relevance of implementing public policies aimed at reducing gender inequalities in the exercise of fruit farming activity in the São Francisco Submedium. In this region, agroindustry developed over the last 50 years, with irrigation technologies, with major transformations, mainly in the 1990s, both in the form of production and working conditions and in the economic and social repercussions and with this, there was an evolution in the hiring of female labor to exercise the activity of fruit growing. However, despite the participation of women in the viticulture of the Semiarid of São Francisco, the literature on the subject points out the precariousness of female work, as well as the inequality between the work of women and men, with a greater appreciation of their work. Therefore, the research aims to analyze public policies that can be implemented in the semiarid northeast, with the aim of ensuring equal treatment between workers and rural workers of fruit production in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole. The methodological strategy used was a bibliographic research, of qualitative nature with descriptive objective. The study is justified to encourage the improvement of the quality of life of workers in the semiarid region of São Francisco, through the possibility of implementing public policies aimed at economic insertion, social, women in the region's agricultural activity ensuring real equality.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole, located in the northeastern semiarid region, is recognized worldwide for its economic dynamism in the production of irrigated fruit. In this region, agribusiness has developed over the last 50 years, with irrigation technologies, and has seen great transformations, especially in the 1990s, both in the form

of production and working conditions and in the economic and social repercussions [1].

With this, there was a strengthening of irrigated fruit cultivation with emphasis on vitiviniculture and mango cultivation [2], and expansion of formal employment. Currently, according to 2019 data from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company [3], in the Agroindustrial

Pole of Petrolina/Juazeiro, there are the largest mango and grape producers in the country, which drives the economic and tourist development of the region.

Faced with the development of fruit farming in the São Francisco Submedium, formed by municipalities in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco, among them the municipality of Juazeiro (BA) and Petrolina (PE), with the predominant vegetation of caatinga, the female labor began to be absorbed, especially in the culture of table grapes [4], This fact occurred mainly due to the recognition by the employers of the skills and qualification of women to exercise activities essential to viticulture, such as the selection of fruits.

However, businesses and farms in the region hire a greater number of temporary workers, keeping a small number of permanent worker [5], Information ratified by the General Register of Employees and Unemployed - CAGED, in 2019 [6].

Thus, despite the participation of women in the viticulture of the semiarid region of São Francisco, the literature on the subject points to the precariousness of female work, as well as the inequality between women's and men's work, with a greater appreciation of their work [4].

In this perspective, it is noteworthy that, despite the women's organizations to gain visibility, the struggle of social entities and the Collective Labour Convention (CCT), over decades, have brought gains for women workers, wage differences between men and women, and the precariousness in hiring female service remain.

Given this, it is important to ask what is the reason for the devaluation of female labor and inequality in this activity, the search for implementation of public policies as a form of social and economic insertion of women and as a consequence of the mitigation of inequalities is relevant.

II. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

2.1 Female work in the Petrolina-PE/Juazeiro-BA Pole, in Northeast Brazil, inequalities and precariousness

The Brazilian semiarid is a region defined by Law 7,827 of September 27, 1989 and delimited by the defunct Ministry of National Integration (MI), replacing the drought polygon that was understood as the area of the Brazilian Northeast recognized by legislation as subject to repeated prolonged drought crises [7].

Currently, the Brazilian Semiarid, according to the new delimitation of the SUDENE - Superintendence of Development of the Northeast [8], consists of 1,262

municipalities in the states of Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, Bahia, Minas Gerais and Maranhão.

The criteria for delimitation of the semiarid approved by the Resolutions of the Sudene Deliberative Council no 107, of July 27, 2017 and no 115, of November 23, 2017, are the average annual rainfall of 800 mm or less; the Thornthwaite aridity index equal to or less than 0.50; and the daily percentage of water deficit equal to or greater than 60%, considering all days of the year [9] [10]. In addition, the region is marked by two distinct realities: the irrigated areas that stand out for their economic dynamism and agricultural production; and the non-irrigated areas that are characterized by low production, given their dependence on rainwater, resulting in high local poverty.

The Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole is formed by eight municipalities of the northeastern semiarid that are located in the area known as Submedium do Vale do São Francisco, on the banks of the São Francisco River. In the state of Pernambuco, the municipalities of Lagoa Grande, Orocó, Petrolina and Santa Maria da Boa Vista are part of the Pole, and, in the state of Bahia, the municipalities of Casa Nova, Curaçá, Juazeiro and Sobradinho.

It is important to note that the region has soils and climate suitable for growing fruit, with an average annual temperature of 26°C, with availability of water for irrigation from the São Francisco River [11].

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the micro-region polarized by the municipalities of Petrolina and Juazeiro, already played a prominent role in the commercial and service activity of a vast area of the northeastern backlands, despite the absence of a capital flow that would allow the expansion of production activity, in addition to the problems with transport infrastructure that would lead to the transfer of the surplus, therefore, the population survived basically from subsistence activity encountering several obstacles to development.

Until the middle of the last century, it was not possible to predict the development of the region as a major center of fruit production in Brazil, however, from the second half of the 1960s, the concentration of federal investments in the São Francisco River Valley, for the creation of irrigation infrastructure and electric power generation, provoked new investments aimed at strengthening socioeconomic infrastructure, positively impacting on social and economic areas, both in the agricultural area and in the urban environment [12].

With this it was possible to observe the increase in the generation of jobs and income in the region. Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s, there was greater leadership in the private sector, through the organization of entrepreneurs

who started to pressure the government for the expansion of infrastructure, motivated by the need for competition in national and international markets. Thus, strengthened by a remarkable productive reconfiguration, the irrigated fruit farming was consolidated in the region of São Francisco Submedium, with emphasis on vitivincura and mango cultivation.

The region's most developed irrigation complex is located around the cities of Juazeiro (BA) and Petrolina (PE), where, according to data from the São Francisco Valley Development Company - CODEVASF, seven Public Irrigation Projects (PPI) are installed two in Pernambuco: Senator Nilo Coelho and Bebedouro; and five in Bahia: Curaçá, Maniçoba, Tourão, Mandacaru and Salitre.

Analysing public and private investments in the region [2], identified that these resulted in a strong expansion of formal wage-earning, involving one means hiring women.

However [4], despite the fact that practical skills acquired throughout life have been used, women are not recognised in terms of pay.

When it comes to discrimination against women at work, it is decomposed that this is a problem that devastates our society. It is known that the first division of labor was based on sex. Until the 1980s it was a humiliation for the husband to allow his wife to work. However, it is noteworthy that the obstacles encountered by women to be accepted in the labor market come not only from the family, but also from the market itself, and, in present times, still, there is the sexual division of labour favouring male labour to the detriment of female labour.

[13], found that in a recent research entitled "Portrait of Gender and Race Inequalities", the Institute of Applied Economic Research - IPEA, concluded that if there is no acceleration of public policies to ward off gender inequality, It will take 87 years to match the salaries of men and women in Brazil. However, it is noteworthy that the differentiated treatment between men and women is not restricted to wage inequality, since there is also discrimination regarding the functions performed.

It cannot be omitted that women, however qualified they may be, are sometimes allocated to discredited activities, and the majority of them seek to reconcile paid activities with their domestic activities. In addition, female paid occupations have less prestige than male paid occupations, and the majority of women have a small number of functions [14], that is, women do not have as much opportunity as men.

[15], in the last decades of the 20th century, there was a significant change in the profile of Brazilian women's

access to education, schooling and paid work, with women now having more formal education time than men. Despite this, he concludes that the professionalization of these did not guarantee equal access to different occupations.

With regard to the precariousness of female labor in agricultural activity, in particular in the vitiviniculture of the São Francisco Submedium, in the Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole, the literature offers some works dealing with the valuation and hiring of female labor, focusing on inequalities and precariousness.

In the early 1990s, the effects of the globalization of food systems highlighted the sexual division of labor in the San Francisco Underground. There was a significant increase in the female labor force in the activities related to the cultivation of fine table grapes [15], with this, the recognition by employers of certain typical female skills for productive activities was verified. These skills and characteristics attributed to women have become required and "valued" in the new productive processes. Despite this, there was a discrepancy in the average level of pay and working conditions in favor of men.

[02], the sexual division in fruit production work for export in the semiarid Valley of Francisco, point out that the work is marked in all stages of production by associations and representation of "femininity" and "masculinity" referred to the type of work demanded at each stage of production. These authors mention that this demarcation leads to the hierarchical organizing principle, since men perform the activities that demand a higher incidence of equipment and technological resources, as a result, they are remunerated with higher wages than women's labor, there is also an additional salary, established through trade union negotiations.

Furthermore, gender stereotypes are employability criteria verified by both local employers and fruit farmers, with "light" work linked to women and the "heavy" to men, which contributes to the precarious position of women in the labour market [02].

In this way, it clearly shows that employers assign different activities to men and women and redefine women's qualified work as something inherent in their nature, and as a result, do not pay them fairly.

[16], the allocation of social roles, in which women are responsible for lighter or less specialized activities, often leads to the naturalization of socially constructed roles, thus hindering their contestation, which could lead to less rigidity in occupational mobility.

In vitiviniculture where there is a large hiring of women in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole, most of the female labor is in the activity of thinning (with scissors) and the

pinicado (to remove certain parts of the plant)which are essential for the production of fine table grapes, therefore, female activity is of great importance, however, female qualification for work remains symbolically linked to the reproductive sphere, being, in this way, of less prestige and qualification status for the world of work. This established wage differences between men and women, as well as inequalities in employment, career and economic and political participation [02].

It is also noticed that because women accumulate double hours, being responsible for domestic activities, care with children, being more susceptible to events external to the sphere of work, employers despise the hand-female labor, thus having a greater absorption of male labor.

It should be noted that women are mostly employed for temporary work during the wine-growing season, which is ultimately profitable for employers and, although women earn an income from this work, it should not be forgotten that there is a precariousness of female work, because due to the dependence on employment and the need to renew the contract, women workers submit to informal work and suffer exorbitant charges, they are not guaranteed the same rights as are accorded to male workers who for the most part perform the function for an indefinite period.

Despite the difficulties encountered by the workers, it is notorious that the female work in the activity of irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole brought significant changes in the social, family and economic life of the workers, generating personal autonomy and facilitating female inclusion for the exercise of social, political, economic rights, although legally foreseen, are not enjoyed in many regions of the country where women do not have their own income.

However, such changes cannot be used to justify gender inequalities in the exercise of work, thus requiring public policies with female participation to ensure isonomic treatment between workers and rural workers, and as a consequence, respect for the fundamental principle of equality.

2.2 Women's struggle for equality at work in rural areas

The Principle of Equality is one of the most important constitutional principles, being indispensable for the democratic rule of law, so that, without its impact on society, it would be impossible to implement the democratic model [17]. [18], the principle of equality informs of fundamental rights and of the whole constitutional order, being a vector of constitutional interpretation of democracy by virtue of its value.

[19], they call this dimension of the principle democratic and they preach it, prohibiting discrimination in the exercise of power and access to public office. The authors also mention the importance of another dimension of this principle, the liberal one, in which individuals are considered as beings to be treated equally (formal equality), regardless of their birth, status, before the law, general and abstract. In addition, they discuss the social dimension, which has as a consequence the search for measures to achieve equality, with the reduction of social and regional inequalities.

It follows that formal equality establishes the equal treatment of all, without any distinction, this aspect of the principle of equality has been treated in the modern age and consolidated with the French Revolution and the beginning of the contemporary age, in which, first, he thinks of the subject and then thinks of society, thus the individual has come to prevail over the social.

It is noteworthy that formal equality was not an obstacle to the accumulation of wealth by the bourgeois of liberal society. However, the liberalism that emerged in the eighteenth century became the monopoly capitalism of the following century that witnessed the concentration of capital for the few and the exploitation of man by man.

Thus, since the Industrial Revolution, equality before the law has become insufficient, given its impossibility of materialization and, from the 20th century, the State intervenes to effect equality. In this context, equality gains the traits of a material equality (real equality), which aims to ward off inequalities, treating the unequal in an unequal way, in the measure and proportion of their inequalities [14].

[17], teaches:

The principle of equality, after the Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights, has been used by various constitutions created in the Modern State, and with the passage from the Liberal State to the Social State it has been sought not only to give positive rights to written constitutions, but also to effect them, which led to several modifications and evolutions in normative systems of the States, which had not only the formalization of the right to equality, but also the search for its materialization, when there is not only equal treatment for those who are in the same condition and an unequal treatment for people who are in different situations, but an analysis of the most diverse situations is

sought in a punctual way so that greater differences are not created [17].

[20], conceptualizing justice says that: "justice is treating the equal and the unequal alike". It is clear that human beings have characteristics that individualize them, such as race, sex, age, sexual choice, culture, religious belief, among others. Differences must coexist in society, and there must be respect for and guarantee of fundamental human rights. The principle of equality must not make everyone equal, by extinguishing differences, but must prevent unequal treatment from depriving the human being of the exercise of his or her fundamental rights.

In Brazil, the Constitutions, since the Empire, have treated the principle of equality, as equality before the law (formal isonomy), in the sense that the law and its application treat all equally, without distinction.

In the same sense, the Federal Constitution of 1988, at first, deals with formal equality, establishing in art. 5th, caput: "that all are equal before the law, without distinction of any nature" [21]. However, contrary to the previous Brazilian constitutions, it reinforces the principle by establishing norms on equality or seeking the equalization of unequal rights by granting substantial rights (material equality) [22].

In view of this, it is perceived that the original legislator, taking advantage of the advance in the international sphere, when promulgating the Federal Constitution of Brazil of 1988, unlike the previous Constitutions promulgated in Brazil, which dealt only with formal equality, brought, explicitly, the need to propose measures to mitigate social and economic inequalities, in order to rule out unequal and prejudiced treatment.

In this sense [17]:

The constitutional text should contain specific legal rules on the termination of treatment which have a prejudiced nature, as well as any action which would lead to an arbitrary and unjustified distinction, for people, which leads us to understand as pluralism the need to accept the heterogeneous factor as something natural to political coexistence, since we have a society formed by diverse beings, both in personal and social tendencies [17].

Thus, it appears that the Brazilian Constitution in force is not limited to bringing in its text only equality before the law, it also deals with material equality, prohibiting any distinction of origin, race, color, creed, sex (art. 3°, IV); prohibiting and distinguishing wages, of exercise of functions and criteria of admission by reason of

sex, age, colour or marital status (art. 7° , XXX); also establishing that men and women are equal before the law (art. 5° , I).

However, despite the positivity of the principle of material equality, inequalities persist in our society, so there is the need to seek ways to remove them.

From the 1980s, the struggle to combat gender inequality in the countryside, resurfaces, with the social movements of rural women. [23], when analysing these movements, they reported that after the military dictatorship these movements gained strength, having as main themes: the fight for recognition of the profession of farmer and for rights deriving from this recognition, social rights, the right to unionize, participation as members and leaders of these organizations.

In this period, in the Northeast, the movement of rural women grew, with this, they strengthened themselves and begin to produce their reaction processes to submission, as well as, to recognize that they have a certain specific capital sufficient to form a production group, have an income. After experiencing a profitable productive activity, they are not the same, they no longer feel as prisoners, they are more open to the multiplicities of the world, they dream of freedom and thus infect other women, affecting and being affected by these desires [24].

In view of this, we can see the female struggle against the setbacks in her achievements and, above all, for the right to be able to go out on the street, to walk on public transport without being harassed, be beaten or raped and so that no right won with so much struggle and resistance is withdrawn. Today, more than half a century after the "First Feminist Wave", a period of feminist activity in the world, mainly in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, during the 19th and 20th centuries, which raised political rights, equality and freedoms, has amplified and divided into several others. His subject no longer boils down to the white woman, middle class, who fights for civil rights, is also black, mother, the periphery, the young, lesbian and transgender [25].

Thus, while significant wage inequalities between men and women in the same capacity remain, it is undeniable that feminist criticism of inequalities in the labour market played an important role in the intense occupational diversification, experienced by women in the last three decades [26].

The integration of women occurs almost exclusively by their own effort, due to the rapid change of mentality through which our society passes [13].

Also, it is worth noting that the women's movement in Brazil is one of the most respected in the world,

standing out for the decisive contributions in the process of democratization of the state producing, including, important innovations in the field of public policies [26].

Therefore, the struggle of women is extremely important in order to solve the gender inequalities that remain in our society and ensure the creation and implementation of public policies in favor of women.

2.3 Need for Public Policies as a way to mitigate inequalities

Public policies are activities developed by the State (at the federal, state, district or municipal level) directly or indirectly, aiming to use the means at their disposal to meet social needs and demands.

[27], public policies can be conceptualized as follows:

Public policy is a collective action whose function is to materialize social rights demanded by society and provided for in the laws, or, in other words, the rights declared and guaranteed in the laws are only applicable through corresponding public policies, which, in turn, operate through programs, projects and services [27].

Therefore, public policies are actions, instruments and norms of the state, in the economic, social, cultural sectors, among others, that regulate governmental actions to guarantee collective rights, being fundamental to experience a democratic environment.

[17], the Federal Constitution of 1988, presenting in its caput the expression "fundamental objectives", brings the definition of the goals to be achieved by the Brazilian State, through public policies for the promotion of constitutional social benefits in the exercise of the civil service, aiming at the effective promotion of development and the good of all. It highlights that for the construction of this end, it is important not only the creation, but also its implementation, thus ensuring the isolation of those involved.

Based on gender, public policies recognize the gender difference and, based on this recognition, implement differentiated actions aimed at women [28].

These activities when aimed at women in order to mitigate gender differences and ensure entitlement are of paramount importance for the improvement of the quality of life of these and decrease the inequalities existing both in the urban and rural areas of Brazil, thus guaranteeing rights achieved after the struggle of women against discriminatory treatment, however, this is an arduous task, which encounters personal, family and institutional obstacles.

When proposing "gender" public policies, it is necessary to establish the meaning of the changes that are intended, above all, to contemplate the emancipatory condition and the dimension of women's autonomy. In addition, in order for public policies aimed at women to be drawn up and implemented, a dialogue between the state and civil society should be sought, which should be achieved through women's struggle movements.

It is also relevant the institutionalization, in the states and municipalities, of governmental bodies such as secretariats, policy coordinations for women that can ensure the implementation of measures that can reduce inequalities between men and women.

In the Petrolina/Juazeiro Pole there are some public policies directed to rural workers, such as:

- A) Women's Assistance Reference Center CRAM, for protection against domestic violence:
- **B**) National Rural Learning Service SENAR, of Pernambuco, aiming to reduce the dropout of young people (men and women), from rural areas; and
- C) Straw Hat Program for Rural Women (allowance in the off-season and course -crafts).

It cannot be doubted, that despite the existence of some public policies aimed at women in the region under study, the obstacles to the social, political and economic rise of women, gender inequality remains, which leads to the precariousness of female labor in fruit farming in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole.

In this way, it is essential for the guarantee of social and gender equality and the economic growth of women to implement new public policies linked to promoting the increase of day care centers to ensure access to the labor market for working mothers, welfare, health assurance, education, professional qualification, culture, inclusion, empowerment, supervision to guarantee women's rights, as well as disclosure, compliance with and access to these policies, thereby promoting increased income, self-esteem, respect and empowerment of women in the San Francisco Valley and ensuring opportunities and security for rural fruit farmers.

Furthermore, it is equally important to promote women's social mobility and their participation in positions that, for the most part, are held by men, seeking both a factor that provokes change and

visibility for rural organisations, which can contribute to reducing the conditions that favour men over women in the fruit-growing activity of the semiarid and, therefore, to the guarantee, to respect the constitutional principle of isonomy.

III. METHODOLOGY

It is a bibliographic research, of qualitative nature, with descriptive objective. Initially, data collection was performed through bibliographic research in secondary sources, with document analysis. For the development, a data collection was performed at the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE, and CAGED.

As for the method, the methodological process was adopted through the systematic integration of quantiqualitative approaches, aiming at broadening the understanding of the analyzed phenomenon, through the incorporation of the two forms of research, because it provides the researcher a greater field of apprehension of the problem addressed, as it is the most appropriate mixed method in dealing with complex issues [29].

In order to achieve the proposed objectives, the position of women at work in irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole was investigated.

The application of the method was performed in three stages, namely: Pre-analysis; Exploration of the Material; and Treatment of the Obtained Results and Interpretation [30].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

With the realization of the present research, it is possible to observe an increase in the female participation in the activity of irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole, which occurs mainly in viticulture, bearing in mind that most cultural tracts and handling (grinding, pruning, harvesting, sorting) are manual and require more careful and delicate work to avoid waste and meet the requirements of the international market, and so there is a preference for hiring female labor for this activity.

According to the Agricultural Census 2017, prepared by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE, the participation of women in the viticulture of the São Francisco Valley went from 42% in 2006 to 50% in 2017. However, it was observed that, despite performing important work in irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole, female tasks are still undervalued and the lack of opportunities in the semiarid region, the turnover of fruit production activity, the hiring of employees on a temporary basis, provide a scenario where

the workers of this activity, end up submitting to low wages, and may still be subject to violation of their rights.

There can be no doubt that the precariousness of those who depend on few job opportunities and the fruit companies to find their livelihood, generates a situation of dependence and instability for workers. Moreover, the study brought to light the evidence that although fruit farming is an employment-generating activity for the São Francisco Valley region, some of these jobs are occupied by women, mainly in grape and mango crops, given the specificities of the activities, requiring special handling care [31], the employment relationship is still precarious and unequal, as employers disregard the female workforce, and yet there is a greater absorption of male labour.

Thus, the difficulties and unequal treatment between men and women persist, with the need for public policies to solve problems such as functional machismo, low wages and double working hours linked to the lack of appreciation of them by companies, even though women are qualified. Furthermore, in order to reduce inequalities and contribute to social justice, it is essential for companies to assume their responsibilities and take steps to improve working conditions in their production chains, as well as to guarantee a decent wage, safety and equal treatment between workers and workers, good transport conditions, food, comfort in their work breaks among other practices and policies to ensure equality between men and women working in fruit farming.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole in the northeastern semi-arid region is one of the main activities generating employment in the region, being largely occupied by women mainly in grape and mango crops as a result of the special handling care and post-harvest activities taking place at the *Packing House* [31].

However, the female qualification for work remains symbolically linked to the reproductive sphere, thus being of lower prestige and qualification status for the world of work. This established wage differences between men and women, as well as inequalities in employment, career and economic and political participation [2].

In addition, female hiring occurs mostly on a temporary basis and although the contracts are formal, guaranteeing the rights guaranteed by labor laws, there is no guarantee of the same rights of the contract for an indefinite period, in addition to the fact that there is a large number of small enterprises in the region where there is a higher incidence of informal female employment contract [31].

It is important to highlight that the workers spend part of the year without employment, leaving the option of looking for alternative occupations, such as single workers in fruit growing, domestic service provision, as well as resorting to social subsidy programs.

It remains clear, therefore, that despite the irrigated fruit growing in the Petrolina/Juazeiro pole has caused significant changes in the social, family and economic life of women, inserting workers in the labor market and guaranteeing income for them, gender inequality and consequently, the precariousness of women's work remains.

In this way, faced with the obstacles and unequal treatment that lead to the precarization of women's work, it is important to encourage the participation of women in the process of drafting laws and creating bodies that ensure the implementation of public policies (linked to education, well-being, health, professional qualification, among others), with a gender focus, with the aim of promoting equal treatment between men and women workers in irrigated fruit farming in the São Francisco Submedium, as well as female social mobility, equality in the occupation of posts and functions in this activity, thus ensuring respect for the constitutional principle of isonomy.

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