



EuroMed Rights
EuroMed Droits
الأورو-متوسطية للحقوق

EuroMed Rights Executive Committee meeting

Brussels, 24-26 March 2017

Minutes – Approved

EuroMed Rights' Executive Committee met on 24-26 March in Brussels, at the time when the EU was celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. In the margin of the EC meeting, i.e. on 23-24 March, advocacy meetings were held on Syria, Lebanon and regional funding with the EU (DG NEAR, DEVCO, EEAS).

PARTICIPANTS

- Executive Committee members: Michel Tubiana (President), Nabia Haddouche (Vice president), Moataz El Fegier (Treasurer), Søs Nissen, Wadih Al-Asmar, Catherine Teule, Isaias Barreñada, Osman İşçi (on 26 March am by Skype).
- Secretariat: Marc Schade-Poulsen (Executive Director), Vincent Forest (Advocacy Director), Ramy Salhi (Head of Maghreb Office), Nicole Lambert (Advocacy Officer) and Elise Poumay (Advocacy Officer)
- Absent with notification: Raffaella Bolini, Hamdi Shaqqura, Anitta Kynsilehto, Messaoud Romdhani.
- Other participant: Kamel Jendoubi (Honorary President of EuroMed Rights).

AGENDA

1. Welcome, Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting of 28-30 October 2016
2. Discussion on the situation in the region
3. The situation in Syria, civil society and the work of Syrian human rights organisations
4. Report from the Secretariat
5. Financial Report from the Secretariat, including update on Fundraising
6. 20th anniversary of EuroMed Rights
7. Advocacy Strategy on Migration and Refugee rights
8. 2017 Work Program for Tunis office
9. Work Plan for Network activities in Morocco
10. Renewal of EuroMed Rights Strategy in 2018
11. Turkey: which strategy/actions from EuroMed Rights
12. Membership issues
13. Miscellaneous

1. Welcome, Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting of 28-30 June 2016

Michel Tubiana welcomed the EC members in attendance, noting that Hamdi Shaqqura and Osman İşçi had not been allowed to leave their countries - Osman would take part in the Sunday session on Turkey by Skype. He also welcomed Mazen Darwish (President of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, Anwar Al-Bunni (President of the Syrian Center for Legal Research and Studies), Kamel Jendoubi, as well as the staff.

2. Discussion on the situation in the region

Regional developments: Michel Tubiana noted the deterioration of the situation in Syria and Egypt. In Syria, the situation is horrible and difficult to understand – game of powers is not helpful and Trump’s US are making the world situation even more instable. The elections in France and Germany are upcoming. In Germany, Schultz’s SPD now looks in a better form while in France, the political climate is bad with corruption affairs, a lack of political debate and the rise of the Front National party.

In the South, the referendum in Turkey on the presidential regime may not lead to a victory for Erdogan. Meanwhile our friends are targeted, e.g. IHD vice-president arrested, and Osman Isci without passport. Erdogan’s comments on Nazism re the Netherlands and Germany is a small phenomenon but if his reform is adopted, the situation will worsen with clashes between Erdogan and Member States.

Europe has witnessed new acts of terrorism, the latest in London. The European Court of Justice decision on Western Sahara as a different, non-autonomous entity not part of Morocco should lead us to be vigilant, since it is extremely sensitive for us.

Egypt: Moataz El Fegery told the EC that Sisi’s regime was using new tactics: freezing the assets, abuses against the whole human rights community. Many terrorist attacks in Egypt take place against Copts and the military. State policies fuel terrorism and make terrorism happen, like what happened in Syria. With the suppression of peaceful alternatives, people are stuck between the military and the terrorist project. There is some hope, e.g. Sisi is not popular due to the economic situation, and there are some opportunities. However, Sisi is internationally supported.

Morocco: Nabia Haddouche informed that no government had been set up since the legislative elections five months ago. The PJD’s number 2 is now the Prime Minister. No one from another party can be appointed by the King, however PJD cannot govern alone. The problem lies in the absence of a strong opposition.

Lebanon: Wadih Al-Asmar mentioned that the Parliament had voted the creation of a Human Rights National Committee last October. In April 2017, its 10 members will be appointed for six months. The Committee can submit individual cases of human rights violations. Wadih is candidate. There will be elections in May-June 2017 but the electoral law has not been approved yet.

Spain: Isaías Barreñada recalled that there was no absolute majority in the Spanish Parliament. The opposition is fighting against the legislation adopted by the PP. In the coming months, universal jurisdiction could be re-activated, and the “Gag law” on freedom of assembly may be revised. In terms of development aid, Spain provides support to transit states on migration.

European Union: Under the revised ENP, the EU has already negotiated Partnership Priorities with Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria. A neighbourhood-wide report will be published in May. A working group of MEPs seems to be willing to move on the antisemitism definition promoted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), which would be a dangerous, unacceptable

move. The Network should act at the most appropriate time with a statement and/or a meeting with president of the working group, who is a Spanish socialist.

Catherine Teule warned about the rise of the far-right parties in opinion polls and elections. The mixing of terrorism and migration issues is very worrying, and there is a radicalisation of the discourse by the Council of the EU and the European Commission, making migration policy a return policy. Maghreb countries are put on “safe countries” list, asylum seekers are detained to avoid secondary movement from Italy/Greece to other more ‘open’ countries or where their families live. On migration, we should ask ourselves which advocacy may work, since denunciation is useless and informing is not enough.

3. The situation in Syria, civil society and the work of Syrian human rights organisations

Anwar Al-Bunni paid tribute to the Network for its important support to Syrian human rights organisations. The international institutions in charge of protecting human rights values are failing to safeguard them. Terrorism is not a recent threat; we can mitigate the effects but we cannot eradicate terrorism. The fight against terrorism should start with building an environment that is not a fertile ground for terrorism. Without justice, terrorism and extremism will spread, no justice leads to more radicalisation. In Syria, the situation is the result of the collapse of democratic and human rights values. Impunity has created this global chaos.

Mazen Darwish: The uprising in Syria called peacefully for rights and dignity. It turned into a bloody conflict, and Syria is now witnessing an outlawed war. Human rights violations in Syria are not new phenomena, but now they have been generalised and systematic– all families have been affected. There have been many negotiation rounds in Geneva. It is turning into a dialogue between warlords (the regime and the armed groups). There is a need for looking at the root causes of the conflict, e.g. Kurdish issue which is not confined to Syria (regional dimension), social fabric of Syria (the mosaic of communities coexisting peacefully has been destroyed during the conflict). Syria is collapsing at all levels; the only safety net is civil society, with hundreds of CSOs. Syrian CS finds itself now between the Assad regime and the armed militia/factions, both repressing CS and HRDs. Yet, CS is filling the void, e.g. social services, and they denounce the violations wherever the perpetrators are (most violations are perpetrated by the regime).

The European response only deals with the refugees and how to stop the migration flows. They don't ask why these people are fleeing Syria! The response of the international community has been a military one, but a military response does not bring anything, and will not stop terrorism. The Syrian society has been emptied of its people, its brains. There are many social problems, with a whole generation of children and young people now growing and attracted towards extremist organisations. Many Syrians have left the country and when the war is over, they will not go back without justice. People have lost faith in human rights and in all systems of values. The discourse on human rights is perceived as propaganda and people are seeking revenge against the criminals. The only way to prevent such will for revenge is justice to prevail. Women on the market place are sold like slaves; gender-based violence is systematic and women are used as bargaining chips.

Q&A:

1. Is there any effort to create a **national umbrella for all emerging CSOs**?
 - Anwar: CSOs are divided along political lines; there is no will to have one umbrella to bring together all the organisations. There are no more decision-makers in Syria, they are just serving the interests of regional and international more powerful players.
 - Mazen: Bringing all organisations under the same umbrella is not easy, if not impossible, also because the CSOs are in many different places, shattered. However, there is much networking and coordination, especially on advocacy, accountability and documentation.

2. What **weight and leverage of CSOs**?

- Anwar: CS has no space and its voice in the balance of power is not welcome! So, now, it is just the armed people on both sides who have their voices heard. The perception that it is better to have Assad than Da'esh is fuelling the conflict. As a HRD, I will never accept this perception. Now in Syria there are no politicians, no influence on the process. Regional and international powers are those to be targeted.
- Mazen: People are afraid that without the regime, Da'esh will win. But if we prepare the democratic forces, Da'esh won't be the only alternative. We have contact with some political parties, at least those who accept to discuss with HR groups. Dialogue with the political actors is important to be realistic, our role is to push pressure. In the Syrian context, we can only do this in Geneva during the negotiations, not in Syria.

3. **What role could EuroMed Rights play as a bridge** between Syrian NGOs in the neighbouring countries and the organisations where the Syrian CSOs are based now?

- Anwar: The Network should serve as a bridge/facilitator between Syrian CSOs and other CSOs, e.g. Tunisia CS. We need to learn from others, and more advocacy/pressure is needed on the EU for more space for CS from the region. The Network should renew its commitment in favour of HRDs and focus on the issue of justice and accountability, not just on advocacy. Justice and accountability can bring peace.
- Mazen: EuroMed Rights could support new organisations, mitigating divisions and bringing expertise on advocacy and technical issues. However, when we talk to each other, the first question is whether any activist has died. The circumstances are very dangerous/extreme, and the conditions differ from the areas held by the regime and those under Da'esh. More coordination in the countries where the Syrian NGOs are based, e.g. in Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey, is needed. About transitional justice, it is premature to discuss it now when the conflict is still raging, but we can prepare for it through documentation.

Marc Schade-Poulsen pointed out that it is a challenge when the fight against impunity is put aside, referring to the Northern Ireland experience. CSOs and HRDs leaving Syria may have more possibilities to structure their work outside Syria. Michel Tubiana thanked Anwar and Mazen for their presence and contributions. It is not realistic to think about unifying the organisations but the Tunisian experience shows that it is possible to bring together very different NGOs. On transitional justice, a network can define the frameworks and the objectives. It is up to the Syrian organisations to define the methods. What we can reaffirm is that "We are with you!"

4. **Report from the Secretariat**

FOAA: EuroMed Rights is waiting for the answer of DANIDA to decide when to start our FOAA activities. A seminar is planned in the autumn linked to the activities around the 20th anniversary of EuroMed Rights. The idea is to focus on shrinking space and the ENP. EuroMed Rights is also waiting for the EU to launch a call for proposals for a structured dialogue for civil society worth 3 million EUR.

Gender: The Istanbul Convention campaign is ongoing and was launched in Tunisia and Morocco. EuroMed Rights has published several factsheets on violence against women, there was a training in Morocco and another one will take place in Istanbul next week. EuroMed Rights is also conducting internal gender mainstreaming training of the Network, both for offices and gender focal points of each working group. Nabia Haddouche thinks that a resource person for gender mainstreaming is needed - other than the gender programme officer. Nabia thinks that we shouldn't hold a gender audit ahead of the next General Assembly, but rather do an internal assessment. Ramy highlighted that the launch of the campaign in Tunisia was a great success in terms of event and media coverage. In terms of follow-up, there is always a confusion between the office in Tunis and the regional WG, as it is not clear who is supposed to have the leadership. If the Tunis office is clearly designated as the leader of

the follow-up, they are happy to do so. In Morocco, there is no leadership problem as ADFM is the leader of the coalition, but there is a problem of resources. In Jordan, there is work done, but low profile. It works well in Lebanon.

Migration and asylum: Good WG meeting in Brussels, as well as advocacy meetings afterwards with Belgian authorities on their list of “safe countries”. The Frontexit campaign is ongoing. On the fundraising front, we lost a fundraising opportunity with EPIM and HBF, and SIDA refused did not wish to fund sub-regional networking in the Machrek.

Palestine/Israel: EU advocacy workshop took place in Brussels in November. A focus group on business and human rights has been set up. Main work is around the 50th anniversary of the occupation by Israel in early June 2017.

ECOSOC: The report has been published. We are now trying to raise funds for this project.

Algeria: EuroMed Rights is bringing HRDs to Geneva for the UPR pre-sessions. EU cooperation on Algeria is going down for the moment, they seem to wait for the elections. Isaías Barreñada explained what happened with the Tindouf mission and clarified that not everyone had their visas refused (Isaias got one and used it to go to Tindouf). Michel thinks that we should apply again for the visas. Isaias thinks that we should approach the Sahrawi representation in Brussels at the highest level (i.e. Michel).

Egypt: Following the trial observation on the case of Aya Hegazy, Moataz thinks we need to work on the ground, and he suggested to send a EuroMed Rights delegation to Egypt this year. Within the group we have coordination on advocacy actions (e.g. action on EU-Egypt relations and Merkel’s visit to Egypt) and relocation (study finalised, coordination call). The challenges are the following: political polarisation; many travel bans that stop activists from joining the group’s meeting, and different assessment of the situations or role that foreign organisations should play in Egypt. There are also personal disagreements between people and organisations.

Decision on principle to send a mission to Egypt in 2017.
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Morocco: We are monitoring the trial of Gdeim Izik.

Syria: A meeting in Brussels on accountability was held last November, followed by an open seminar. The Syrian partners have said that they want more influence on the EU project that is managed by EuroMed Rights. The next meeting will be in The Hague in early May. Marc Schade-Poulsen raised the idea of doing a mission with members from Syria and Turkey in the Kurdish territories or Syria. The EU contract is finishing at the end of July. We are trying to raise funds for the continuation of the project.

Turkey: Following the situation, we have issued several statements. An application for EU funds has been sent to do trial monitoring in Turkey with IHD as a partner.

Tunisia: cf. session 8

Advocacy: We will send an input on the Joint Communication on revised ENP. Call for proposals for the regional structured dialogue is expected in the coming week.

Communication: The number of social media followers has increased. Google AdWords also helps our web reach.

Finances: SIDA will conduct two evaluations of EuroMed Rights in May and June. They will visit our offices. This will determine if they fund us after the current grant. Isaias reminded us that Brexit would

have a huge impact on development aid and suggested we discuss this with our British members to prepare a roadmap.

5. Financial Report from the Secretariat, including update on Fundraising

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the budgets and accounts as well as the update on fundraising.

Decision: All documents were approved, including the suggestion to cover a 20th anniversary event in Tunisia including an executive committee meeting and staff development days; and a joint staff-EC encounter on EuroMed Rights renewed strategy. The EC also approved the suggestion to hold a Brussels 20th anniversary event on the issue of shrinking spaces, and finally to move the Brussels office to safer space.

Debate/Questions:

6. 20th anniversary of EuroMed Rights

The aim is to try turning all our activities of this year into 20th anniversary activities. It was suggested that the FOAA budget be used to hold a seminar in Tunisia or Brussels on our 20th anniversary, and to group it with the EC meeting and Staff Days. Moataz thinks that we should have one event in the North in Brussels and one in the South in Tunisia. Michel thinks that we should focus on a message saying why we continue to exist while the EuroMed region doesn't exist anymore, while FOAA can be a good basis for this - bringing together people we have supported and defended. Søs thinks we could use this hook to launch discussions on our future strategy for 2018-2020. Kamel Jendoubi suggested to check where the other actors of this process are now, 20 years later, both locally and internationally.

It was suggested that Marc send a concept note to the EC as basis for discussion.

Decision: Marc will send a concept note to the EC as basis for discussion on the two events, in Brussels and Tunis.

7. Advocacy Strategy on Migration and Refugee rights

Catherine Teule presented the strategy and explained that the working group agreed to focus on the question of externalisation of EU borders. Vincent Forest recalled that this was the advocacy part of the migration strategy that the EC adopted in June 2016 in Athens. This strategy is not a sacred document, it is a guide, and we remain flexible to developments. Søs Nissen welcomed the strategy and asked if we can add an evaluation column to monitor its implementation. Isaias Barrenada was surprised that monitoring of bilateral relations is not included in the strategy, e.g. monitoring of readmission agreements, there are not just EU ones, but national ones as well. Catherine Teule explained that this information should come from the group, and it doesn't. Michel Tubiana highlighted the difficulty in obtaining information on the monitoring of these agreements, and Wadih Al Asmar explained that it is the same problem in Lebanon.

Catherine Teule recalled that the progress made by the working group to have a common approach is enormous. She found that the focus on the respect of rights in the countries of the South and East Mediterranean is maybe missing from the note beyond ECOSOC rights, but could be potentially added in the future. Michel Tubiana noted that the safe country factsheets should be revised. Isaias Barrenada found that the case of Spain is not highlighted enough in the note. Vincent Forest agreed

with Søs Nissen that the actions should be reviewed and clarified that the planning includes actions every six months, the idea is not to do everything at the same time. The advocacy strategy for the Gender WG will be next.

Decision: The Advocacy Strategy on Migration was unanimously adopted.
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8. 2017 Work Program for Tunisia by the Maghreb office

Ramy Salhi presented the themes managed by the Tunisia programme and the division between the two projects. In total, there are six priorities: the first four also include the tripartite dialogue project with four working groups that meets twice a year:

1. **Women rights and gender equality.** This WG follows three axes of work. 1) the legal framework on violence against women (VAW), 2) women empowerment and women trafficking (*traite des femmes*) and 3) women involvement in public and political spheres.
2. **Migrants and refugees' rights.** The three axes of work are 1) following the current negotiations between the EU and Tunisia in the field of migration (readmission and visa facilitation agreements), 2) the legal framework for the protection of the asylum seekers and 3) the situation of refugees in Tunisia.
3. **Economic and social rights.** The axes of work are 1) the cooperation between the EU and Tunisia, in particular the negotiations of the "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement" (DCFTA or *ALECA in French*) and 2) the fight against all forms of discrimination, such as the discrimination between regions of Tunisia or between the different categories of the population.
4. **Reform of the judiciary.** The adoption of a new Constitution was a great step forward but now Tunisia must harmonise all its national legislation and establish the institution created by the Constitution. On this topic, the project works with partner and sectoral organisations such as the *Association des magistrats* or the *Barreau des avocats*. It also follows closely EU cooperation with Tunisia in the field of Justice such as the PARJ (*Programme d'appui à la réforme de la Justice*) which the second phase (PARJ 2) has started recently.

The fifth and sixth priorities are linked to the project on supporting civil society, helping them organise event, campaign, etc:

5. **Individual freedoms.** For the moment they work on a) LGBT in Tunisia – through a collective created especially on this topic – in particular to withdraw Article 230 which criminalises homosexuality, b) withdraw of Article 227 bis which allows a rapist to avoid criminalisation if he marry his under-aged victim, c) the law on drugs as many young people are sent to prison because of this law, and this lead to overcrowded prisons, d) freedom of thought, e) the right to choose who you marry, as Tunisian women can't marry non-Muslim partners (this is also linked to the sixth priority).
6. **Human rights culture/education.** On this topic, they also support many events (festivals, movies, theatre, etc.)

Only 15-20% of activities have been organised in the regions due to lack of time and human resources. In 2016, the Tunisia office has organised over 220 public events, sometimes in three different regions. Marc insisted on the results of this programme: as it seems to be only a list of activities, the Tunisia office has initiated a process of reporting on results since the office opening. Ramy explained that it was not an easy exercise since they don't have much written evidence of the results in 2011-2012. Yet, they can count for instance a high number of laws that have been blocked, amended or even suggested after the work done.

Ramy Salhi explained that the working groups gathered specialised organisations in addition to the traditional members and partners. Michel Tubiana noted that we could face an issue by working with only certain of our members, Ramy Salhi approved and explained that some of them tend to see us only as a financial support and they don't want us to be involved beside this. There are also other partners and researchers with whom the Tunis office collaborates on an ad hoc basis. Furthermore, the Network holds an annual meeting with members to evaluate and plan future work together.

Nabia Haddouche asked what the role of the office was in the **implementation of the Istanbul Campaign in Tunisia**. She also requested clarification about the role of the office as a **"Maghreb" office**. All the dimensions presented by Ramy Salhi also exist in Morocco so the Tunisia office could have supported Moroccan CSOs on VAW legislation and the reform of the judiciary.

Ramy Salhi recognised a lack of coordination on the Istanbul Campaign between the Gender and Tunisia programmes. If this point is clarified, they will implement what is expected from them. Regarding the work on Maghreb: due to the deterioration of the situation in **Libya**, it is not possible to work from there so the office is supporting from Tunisia with the CIHRS who has a dedicated project. On **Algeria**, there is a dedicated programme which focuses on supporting existing dynamics but it is not possible to be based in the country. On **Morocco**, our members are active there, the Network supported them through some advocacy and communication activities. There is some coordination on certain themes where we already have regional working groups but we lack resources to build a real regional "Maghreb" project.

Søs Nissen asked for further clarification on **Jamaity**. The work of Jamaity is a website platform, it is actually a database gathering info on CSOs, their activities, jobs and calls for proposals open to civil society. Jamaity is now totally independent from the Network but they keep close links (R. Khouili is their President, A. Yacoubi is their secretary-general). The Network is now supporting the *"Collectif des libertés"* in the same format as for Jamaity but it is only the starting phase of formalising it.

Michel Tubiana proposed that Ramy Salhi was given the mandate to investigate, through the work done by the *Collectif*, the possibilities of developing such work at regional level on 'discrimination'. Marc Schade-Poulsen pointed out that our objective was to link the current debate in Europe and in the South, not to develop a "south-south" dynamic. Michel Tubiana noted Marc Schade-Poulsen's comment and pointed out that we needed to start this work on discrimination at some point and starting from the South would allow us to extent it to the North afterwards through networking. Catherine Teule highlighted that racism was a key discrimination issue common in the North and in the South. Michel Tubiana noted that the EC already discussed this "discrimination" work but the issue is to identify where to start. The LGBT movement is strong in Europe but it is only starting in the South, we could start from there to fit with the GA requirement to extend our North-South dynamic. Isaias Barrenada was not sure that LGBT organisations would be ready to work on other topics. Michel noted that this issue must be further discussed since his original proposal cannot be adopted due to lack of consensus. We must consult members on this to see how we move on with this regional work, e.g. on the LGBT rights issue, at least to define what the existing dynamics are in the South and if they have any interest in cooperating together. For the time being, the *Collectif* will develop its work and further discussion will be held at another time – including during the Sunday session on the Strategy. To conclude the session, Ramy Salhi said the *Collectif* would consult with key organisations in other countries, and this would help us clarify certain questions for our future discussions.

Decision: The work program for Tunisia was approved
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9. Work Plan for Network activities in Morocco

Ramy Salhi reminded that activities on Morocco were mainly ad hoc activities - such as the conference on the reform of the Judiciary. Besides these activities, the Network has supported the work of Moroccan members through advocacy and communication work. Thanks to the Norway grant, we will be able to develop our work on Morocco, following a similar model as the existing one in Tunisia.

In Morocco, there will be **three thematic priorities**: 1) women's rights and gender equality, 2) the reform of the judiciary and 3) migration, migrants and refugees' rights. These three themes will gather - in working group meetings - our members and key partners to develop recommendations and mobilise around certain issues. This project and methodology will also allow us to develop advocacy and, in the longer term, the tripartite dialogue with the EU with Morocco. A Moroccan coordinator will be recruited. As the first year of the project has already started, we must see how we can adapt our plans towards the two years of the initial project, especially as launching three priorities at the same time is a challenge.

Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that due to the difficult relationship between the EU and Morocco for the moment, the tripartite dialogue is not the priority and the person identified should see what our added value can be. Michel Tubiana insisted that the person selected should be approved by all our local members. We need to build this new project while monitoring possible resentment. Our added value in this project will be the European dimension. The Court of Justice's decision is important for EU-Morocco relations but as a network, we don't aim at influencing fisheries or agricultural cooperation. The added value of the Network could clearly be on developing members' advocacy work towards the EU by regrouping partners and identifying priority recommendations. Catherine Teule pointed out that, at least on migration, such coordination and common vision do not exist.

Linking this work with the Tunis office would be coherent with the regional dimension that this office has to develop. She also insisted on the need to clarify where to start as the situation seems to be blocked at several levels (no government in Morocco, no relations with the EU, etc.). Michel Tubiana considered that the first steps would be to consult members in Morocco and to recruit the coordinator. Ramy Salhi concluded by saying that the EC would have to be fully involved to ensure civil society and partners' implication in this project. It won't be easy, the Tunisia project faced some issues too when the Network started it, but with the right person in Morocco, it should be feasible.

10. Renewal of EuroMed Rights Strategy in 2018

The objective of the session was to initiate a reflection, not to take any decisions. One of the questions will be to determine if it is still relevant to have a strategy over six years. Two dimensions are currently missing in the document and will be added: 1) gender mainstreaming and 2) the structures which compose the Network (e.g. WG), how they work and how we can improve their functioning.

The document submitted by Marc raises many questions to help fine-tune this debate.

- **Political context.** More and more of the issues we work on are global issues. The latest developments in Europe, e.g. the Brexit, are also raising questions such as "how can we approach the EU if it is less and less focusing on human rights?"
- **North-South relations.** Is this still at the heart of our work? Almost no Southern organisations work on the situation in the North, while Northern members are interested in the Network because we focus on the South. Should we go for an asymmetric approach?
- **Themes.** We tend to enlarge the number of themes we are working on but we don't manage to follow them all - shouldn't we instead limit the number of themes and build a network of specialised NGOs?
- **Should we continue to enlarge?** The network grew a lot, maybe reducing may allow us to be closer to our members.

- **Number of countries/country work?** Country work also aims at being closer to our members but it raises practical and organisational questions. We should consider this at EC level. We want a regional approach but this situation evolves at country level.
- **What type of civil society?** What are our criteria, with whom do we work? Which funding do we consider?
- **Our members?** EuroMed Rights should ask itself how it can ensure renewal of its membership and maintain the Network's credibility. In several countries, we witness a generation gap in civil society. A civil society that can't "renew" itself will add difficulties to our work. Generalist organisations are less and less visible to leave space to specialist organisations taking the lead on certain issues.

Kamel Jendoubi pointed out that there were too many questions. In his view, defining a strategy is answering to three questions: 1) Why a strategy? 2) For whom? and 3) How? The first question is the relevance of the "Euromed" dimension. The institutional framework of the Euromed is weakened, pushing us to work at national level, and European states have their own Mediterranean approach. However, we must note that we continue to receive money from donors for this dynamic, so this means that they find it interesting. At national level, the Network shouldn't act directly but can clearly act as a "catalyzer" as it is done in Tunisia. The question on the organisation itself should be added. We don't work to perpetuate the organisation but to fight for our values. The strategy should be for the secretariat and the bodies of the network. Some organisations give the secretariat the competences to take political decisions as they implement decisions while others involve directly the executive bodies and the secretariat implement decisions. Kamel considers that we should distinguish between what is technical and political; however, our members have both ways of functioning. There is no common identity for the Network but reflecting on this will help us clarify our strategy. The last question should be how and who implements this strategy. In his view, we have a participatory approach, with members "guiding" us in our work. The strategy should be suggested by the secretariat and discussed by members as this falls under the strategic role of the secretariat to push the work of the network forward.

Nabia Haddouche suggested that the methodology should start by analysing the context, including at national level as many things have evolved since 2012 and by analysing the organization, "who are we", "how do we work"? A second step would be to identify orientations and priorities to evaluate the work done over the past 20 years and the approach we followed. On the strategic approach, we have often worked with experts to help us in our reflections. We should decide if we do the same this time and if an expert should work directly with the secretariat or if the EC is directly involved in the strategy.

Søs Nissen pointed out that many of the questions raised in Marc Schade-Poulsen's document could be easily answered. She agreed with Kamel Jendoubi that the regional dimension was key. It has been proven that our added value is to initiate work, facilitate it so that a good dynamic can emerge. Things evolve over time, we had thematic working groups that don't exist anymore, but the dynamic and networking are at the core of our work. Søs Nissen also pointed out that some organisations joined the network for the work developed on justice issues which we don't do anymore, therefore they are not working with us so much and we should find ways to fill that gap.

Catherine Teule believed that the Network has a strong identity that is recognised by partners and we should build on it more. Additionally, the working groups managed to develop a common approach and not a North-South approach.

Wadih Al Asmar noted that, in 2012, the EC had a discussion on the country work versus the regional work, but today the situation in the North has worsened. There is a need to go back to the regional dimension since our regional work has a clear added value. Isaias Barrenada agreed that the Euromed concept goes way beyond the political and contractual agreement we focused on initially. The links are

still there and we should redefine what is the “Euromed” for us. This will also force us to reflect about our work towards non-EU actors as they are gaining in importance.

Michel Tubiana agreed on many points raised but insisted on certain aspects:

- We should be more flexible at all levels to be able to accept and adapt more easily to changes. We have focused on the institutional agreement and its failure makes things difficult to us. To be realistic, we need to admit that this “Euromed” perspective fits more to the “small Europe” than to the big one.
- We must clarify our mandate, in particular from a political point of view. What are our objectives, what do we want to achieve? How should we go forward when the political context is constantly moving?
- Regarding our work towards institutions, we have always adapted our approach according to new challenges arising. This is part of our added value and has helped us build our credibility.
- Finally, we should reflect on how we function and how we can improve this with a strong objective of keeping the North-South dimension.
- The first step would be to reduce our reflection around this strategy to the few essential points and then clarify how we debate and decide on it. Michel noted that there will be maximum three other EC meetings before the next GA, therefore the debate should be organised around these meetings and we must plan ways for members to contribute and feel concerned by this issue.

Kamel Jendoubi noted that even if the “Euromed” perspective was more pushed by the Mediterranean countries to counter too big influence of countries of the North of Europe, it is these Northern countries that give funding for our work. He believes that the Network should keep its main office in Copenhagen to keep some distance with the EU, especially with some non-EU countries becoming key on the international scene. Isaias Barrenada insisted that we should be careful with the asymmetric approach of the EU towards countries of the region, especially regarding involvement of civil society, and that we should reflect on the type of civil society we want to involve. Marc Schade-Poulsen commented to explain that some Northern countries allocate funding to the region (e.g. Denmark) because as countries living from trade, they want to ensure rule based environments and local situation will allow them to fulfil their interests. Having some countries funding us also allows us to influence their policies. Isaias Barrenada agreed that the advocacy developed should not only be on the EU but on Member States as well. Søs Nissen recalled the need for the Network to clarify what the members want to work on in the coming years, and to ensure the involvement of younger organisations.

Marc Schade-Poulsen suggested to establish a roadmap with all the steps to be made before the GA, including the 20th anniversary celebration, clarification of our procedures, etc. He will prepare a short text to introduce the reflection to members, and the questions raised during the EC meeting will be developed in an annex.

<p>Decision: Marc Schade-Poulsen will prepare a short document for the members, under the form of a roadmap with the steps until the 2018 GA.</p>
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11. Turkey: which strategy/actions from EuroMed Rights

The discussion was held on Skype as Osman Isci cannot leave Turkey for the moment due to a travel ban. He summarised the situation in Turkey:

- The state of emergency is still applicable and some human rights categories are under threat or totally banned. Governors can ban any type of public gathering if they want to do so. Freedom of assembly is not existing, nor freedom of association. The excuse given by the authorities is that they want to protect the population from criminals who attend demonstrations, while at the same time they allow other events to happen.

- Freedom of thought and the media are much impacted by the authorities' arbitrary decisions to limit these rights. This has also an impact on human rights organisations which try to document human rights violations. They face arrests (such as IHD Vice-President sent to prison for a week) and it is also the case of e.g. lawyers, trade unionists.
- Upcoming referendum: there is no equality in the campaign and the process is lacking transparency. Even the Venice Commission criticised the process. The opposition with some European countries is also used in this context, with regards to the refugee crisis. Osman said that no matter what would be the outcome of the referendum, they would face more problems afterwards. Furthermore, gender issues are key in Turkey for the moment as many women are killed from VAW and there is no protection mechanism. A gender workshop will be organised next week in Turkey, this could help us defining possible actions.

Osman Isci explained that the Network could support local NGOs by taking stance with statements, organising a solidarity mission, preparing a report, having activities in or outside Turkey. He explained that the international human rights mechanisms were too slow to denounce the problems, so maybe the Network should advocate on that as well and denounce the situation in Turkey publicly.

Michel Tubiana thanked Osman Isci for his presentation and noted that more and more governments in Europe are criticising the situation. He wondered whether it would be possible to organise an EuroMed Rights mission in Turkey. Osman Isci supports the idea of having a EuroMed Rights mission in Turkey but the objective must be clarified before deciding on the timing. If the objective is to talk to the authorities, we should wait for after the referendum. This mission can affect Osman Isci directly but it can also be the case without any mission as he has been suspended. Osman Isci even said that a EuroMed Rights mission would give visibility to human rights organisation. Meetings in Istanbul and Ankara could be held, as well as going at the Syrian border although the security situation evolves very fast. Osman suggested that IHD invites relevant persons from that region to Ankara to meet with us anyway. Osman explained that for the time being he was supported by Front Line Defenders to continue his work and that receiving money from outside is feasible if the amount is not big.

Decision: EuroMed Rights will organise a mission in Turkey in the coming months.

12. Membership issues

Decisions:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEAR was unanimously adopted as a member. |
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13. Miscellaneous

Dates of the next EC Meeting in Tunis: **22-24 September 2017**.

Remark: the EC might be preceded/followed by an event around the 20th anniversary.