



EuroMed Rights – Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
EuroMed Droits – Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits humains
الأورو-متوسطية للحقوق- الشبكة الأوروبية المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

EuroMed Rights Executive Committee meeting

Athens, 24-26 June 2016

Minutes

EuroMed Rights' Executive Committee met on 24-26 June 2016 in Athens, Greece. In the margin of the EC meeting, i.e. on 23 and 24 June 2016, meetings were held with Yannis Boutselis, Chrysi Hatzi, and Lampros Mpaltsiotis, the Department of Human Rights at the Ombudman's office; Evangelos Kalpadakis, the Diplomatic Office of the Prime Minister; Konstantis Kambourakis, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Theano Fotiou, the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity. During these meetings the EC members discussed the current situation in Greece with focus on migration and asylum as well as economic and social rights. On 24 June 2016, the Executive Committee also invited the Network's members and partners for a discussion on the situation in Greece.

PARTICIPANTS

Executive Committee (EC) of EuroMed Rights:

Michel Tubiana (President), Moataz El Fegjery (Treasurer), Søs Nissen, Raffaella Bolini, Anitta Kynsilehto, Osman İşçi, Wadih Al-Asmar, Messaoud Romdhani, Catherine Teule, and Isaias Barreñada (EC members).

Secretariat:

Marc Schade-Poulsen (Executive Director), Marit Flø Jørgensen (Programme Director), and Maibritt Nielsen (Senior Executive Secretary, rapporteur).

Absent with notification:

Nabia Haddouche (Vice president) and Hamdi Shaqqura (EC member).

Other participants:

Eugenia Papamakariou, EEDDA; Theocharis Papamargaris Honorary member; Maria Jaidopulu Vrijea, Nikos Poulantzas Foundation, and Eva Giannakaki, Hellenic League for Human Rights (on 24 June, session 2).

AGENDA

1. Welcome, Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting on 5-7 February 2016
2. Meeting civil society: discussion about the current situation in Greece (economic, social, migration and refugees)
3. Discussion on the situation in the region
4. Report from the Secretariat
5. Financial Report from the Secretariat, including update on Fundraising and approval of the Audit report 2015
6. Gender: follow-up to the Gender Working Group meeting/ Gender mainstreaming in the Network
7. Shrinking spaces: follow-up to the seminar and Working Group meeting

8. Follow-up to the EC's internal communication
9. Migration: follow-up to the Migration Working Group meeting
10. Membership issues
11. Miscellaneous



1. Welcome, Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting on 5-7 February 2016

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Michel Tubiana welcomed the Executive Committee (EC) members to the EC meeting, and the EC members approved the agenda for their meeting. He noted with regret that Hamdi Shaqqura had once again been prevented from leaving Gaza and he was thus not able to attend the meeting. Michel Tubiana suggested to raise this issue at the next General Assembly in 2018.

Decision:

- The minutes from the Executive Committee meeting on 5-7 February 2016 were approved without any observations.

Documents:

- 1.1 Agenda for the EC meeting on 24-26 June 2016 (*for approval*)
- 1.2 Minutes from the last EC meeting on 5-7 February 2016 (*for approval*)

2. Meeting civil society: discussion on the current situation in Greece (economic, social, migration and refugees)

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

During the meeting with the Network's members and partners in Greece, the following issues were highlighted:

- The abolishment of the national pension from 2017
- The establishment of a fund aiming at privatising the airport and different important sectors
- A new law introducing measures that exempt some businesses from paying taxes
- The unemployment rate reaching 26%, 50% of the unemployed people being young people
- The maximum salary for young people below 25 years being 400EUR/ month
- The lack of funds for nurses and doctors and the lack of supplies for the hospitals, having as a result that for instance patients with cancer have to wait three months before being treated
- The increasing number of refugees and migrants, reaching 60,000, a lot of them being women and children, many of whom are left in the Greek islands without any clear prospects for their future
- The bad conditions in the refugee camps that are established far from the cities
- The arrival of many NGOs to Greece that implement humanitarian projects, and a strong solidarity movement in Greece
- The many NATO forces that do military exercises in Greece which is worrying
- The feeling of having lived in a state of emergency for the last 6 years
- The refugee crisis as a deep crisis in Europe
- The dominance of xenophobic parties in Europe
- The Greeks being in a state of depression

Michel Tubiana noted that the Greek population had been able to welcome thousands of refugees without resorting to xenophobia as seen in other countries. He added that the crisis is not a migrant crisis but rather a crisis within the EU, and the EU does not understand that Greece does not have enough capacities to guard

the borders. EuroMed Rights is working on both sides of the Mediterranean, and he noted that it is important to establish the link between the North and the South.

Eugenia Papamakariou mentioned that the local NGOs do not have contact with the NGOs from abroad that have received funds from the EU to work on different projects in Greece and manage the camps which the state was supposed to do. She was not sure who would monitor the activities of these new NGOs working in Greece. Maria Jaidopulu Vrijea added that the majority of the funds from the EU are granted to the large NGOs. The solidarity movements coming to Greece consist of the institutional NGOs, the less organised movements, and individuals. She expressed her gratitude that these people come to help, although it is important that they respect the procedures and customs in the local community in Greece.

Moataz El Fegieri noted that, in the 1990s, the European governments believed in some principles and were pushing for human rights. Back then, the South would look towards these governments in the North, however the North and the South now share the same concerns. He thought that the Network should define its approach and alliances - and not only focus on governments but also on interaction with people and build different partnerships. He added that there is a generation gap in the South that is also seen in the UK. Messaoud Romdhani did however not agree with Moataz El Fegieri that there is a generation gap, but facing a crisis, people will react differently, he said.

Catherine Teule agreed with Michel Tubiana that Greece is not able to tackle the refugee crisis itself. She asked whether there is a will to change the legislation and procedures in Greece in relation to asylum. She noted that many decisions from the First Court had been rejected by the Appeal Committee in Greece, but that some changes had then been introduced, having as a result that the decisions from the First Court had been validated. Eva Giannakaki noted that the Asylum Law in Greece had been changed, and that faster procedures had been introduced for Syrians as a consequence thereof.

Michel Tubiana asked whether the Greek legislation would allow that a migrant in an irregular situation could be put in prison which is the case in France. According to Eva Giannakaki's knowledge, they would be deported but not be put in prison. Catherine Teule noted that, in many countries, there is a lot of confusion on this issue, and thus not only in Greece.

3. Discussion on the situation in the region

Moderator: Raffaella Bolini

During the discussion on the situation in the region, the EC members highlighted the following developments:

South

- The right to freedom of assembly that is under threat in Turkey where also torture and violence against women prevail
- The increased solidarity actions and movements, being the people's response to the current migration system
- The crisis in the South that have an impact on the North and vice versa, as an effect of the globalisation
- The tensions between the EU and Morocco in relation to the European Court ruling regarding EU-Morocco deal on Western Sahara

North

- The UK leaving the EU according to the referendum on 23 June 2016 that might lead to the exit of other EU countries, and the weakening of the EU in the Security Council, the UK being one of the two permanent European members of the Council
- The EU-Turkey agreement on migrants that affects other countries like Libya, Greece etc.
- The EU's partnership agreements with African countries, aiming at stopping asylum seekers and migrant flows to Europe
- The increasing number of borders and walls inside the EU
- The election campaign in the US that will influence the political scene the next six months

- Spain as one of the countries in Europe that hosts the less number of refugees although the public opinion is favourable to refugees.

Michel Tubiana said that the crisis in the North was not only related to refugees and economic and social rights and he suggested that, while maintaining its focus on the South, the Network should start to focus on the North of the Mediterranean as the situation in the North is alarming and the EU is facing a deep crisis. The Network should also seek more networking within the EU. Marc Schade-Poulsen agreed with Michel Tubiana to work more on Europe although there is a need, as a first step, to conceptualise what the added value of the Network can be in the North. He also expressed his doubt that the countries in the South, having a lot of issues to solve themselves at the national level, would be able to invest in the North. Isafas Barreñada thought that the Network should pay attention to how some authoritarian regimes are benefitting from the weakening situation in the North, i.e. for instance Egypt and Morocco.

In general, Wadih Al-Asmar thought that the human rights organisations have lost their weight as the public opinion has been bombarded with a lot of issues. 10 years ago the people felt sympathy with migrants but now they feel that they are in a difficult situation themselves. The role of the Network would be to lobby for an EU that adopts political decisions and that is ready to stop the dialogue with countries that violate human rights. Moataz El Fegiery thought that the Network should reconsider the current advocacy model and for instance lobby for European governments to interfere and expand its work to European civil society. He noted that there is a shift from human rights to citizenship rights, and that many European governments are focusing on their national rights while questioning at the same time the UN human rights standards. Moataz El Fegiery also thought that the Network should consider how to support its members and how to secure funding for its activities given that the funding for the NGOs will be affected in the coming years.

4. Report from the Secretariat

Moderator: Osman İşçi

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the report from the Secretariat (*4.1 EuroMed Rights Activity Review no. 10, January to March 2016*) and invited the EC members to comment on the activities of the different Working Groups that they had participated in (activities are only mentioned below when they are not included in the *4.1 EuroMed Rights Activity Review no. 10, January to March 2016*).

Syria

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that he and Anitta Kynsilehto would go on a mission to Turkey following the EC meeting in order to meet with organisations working on refugee issues. A mission to Jordan and Lebanon would also be organised to understand the main human rights concerns.

Wadih Al-Asmar thought that the question should be asked whether it is pertinent for the Network to be visible through confessional organisations. For the sake of the Network's image and the message it will convey in Syria, he thought that the Network should be cautious on this issue.

EcoSoc

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the Network's application for EcoSoc Status has been treated for the first time; the UN has however put forward some questions to the Network's programmes and therefore their decision has been postponed to the next session in 6 months. Some lobbying should be done before then.

Communication

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the Communication Department is conducting a test campaign on the human rights defenders behind bars in Egypt in cooperation with Egyptian NGOs. In this regard, the EC members were encouraged to sign a statement on Egypt to be found on the Network's web site.

In relation to communication, Isafas Barreñada noted that the use of the Network's reports is very limited, and that the EU, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the national institutions do not receive the results of the

Network's work on a regular basis but these are used to a larger extent inside the Network. In relation to Spain, 70% of the recipients on the current distribution list are no longer relevant and the results of the Network are thus not well disseminated in Spain. He thought that it should be clear who is receiving what at all moments.

Catherine Teule introduced another element in relation to Isaías Barreñada's concerns in terms of communication. She noted that this issue is more directly linked to the Network's capacity of doing lobbying and that it is not one person's responsibility only. She suggested to make it clear for the Working Groups which messages to convey to and to whom. Michel Tubiana thought that that Communication Department should be more proactive and contact the members to get to know their press contacts.

Finally, Wadih Al-Asmar suggested to send a small CV of the EC members prior to the external meetings in relation to the EC meetings.

Structured dialogue process with civil society

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed the EC members that the EU Commission is trying to set up a structured dialogue with civil society in the Mediterranean. EuroMed Rights has been invited to the advisory group, however the Network's advice has not been taken into account to a significant degree so far. Earlier this year, the EU Delegation invited a lot of people, including members of the Network, to a Civil Forum in Brussels that was not well prepared. The outcome of the seminar was that the EU will hand over the process to civil society, thus providing three million Euros over three years that would cover the web site, an annual meeting/ other meetings and e-training on advocacy

Michel Tubiana noted that the EU has always wanted to have its own civil society. He did not think that the Network should be absent from the process although the Network should be left with the possibility of expressing its point of view in relation to the participants lists and of leaving the process, if need be.

Moataz El Fegiery said that his feeling was that the process in relation to the structured dialogue is not transparent and inclusive, and that many of the participants on the list of participants for the workshop in October do not represent the situation in the region now. The Network should suggest human rights defenders from the region given that it works in the region. He however questioned whether the NGOs need the structured dialogue, and he reminded the EC members that the EuroMed NGO Platform had led to division in some countries, for instance in Egypt. He thought that the Network should stay outside the process if the process is not inclusive.

Isaías Barreñada did not agree with Moataz El Fegiery on this point; he thought that it would have some consequences for the Network to be outside the process. The Network should instead express very clearly that there are some problems in relation to this process. Raffaella Bolini thought the Network should suggest that the advisory group should be composed by civil society – old and new – that should participate in a dialogue in a democratic way. Catherine Teule agreed with Isaías Barreñada that the Network should take part in the process, also to present a critical analysis of the process. Wadih Al-Asmar was of the same opinion as Catherine Teule and Isaías Barreñada that the Network should remain in the process.

Decisions

- The Network should consult with its members in relation to the structured dialogue process
- The Network should set up a meeting with the Arab Development Network (ANND) and SOLIDA in order to present the Network's concerns in relation to the structured dialogue process

Documents:

4.1 EuroMed Rights Activity Review no. 10, January to March 2016 (*for information*)

4.2 Work Plan 2016 (*for information*)

5. Financial Report from the Secretariat, including update on Fundraising and approval of the Audit report 2015

Moderator: Anitta Kynsilehto

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the Audit report 2015 as well as the Budgets 2016-2018 to the Executive Committee.

Following the presentation of the Budgets 2016-2018 as well as the presentation and signing of the Audit report 2015, the Executive Committee discussed different scenarios in relation to the current financial situation (*without rapporteur*).

Decisions:

- The Audit report 2015 was approved
- The Budgets 2016-2018 were approved

Documents:

- 5.1 Budgets and accounts (*2 documents*) (*for approval*)
- 5.2 Update on Fundraising (*for information*)
- 5.3 Audit report 2015 (*for approval*)

6. Gender: follow-up to the Gender Working Group meeting/ Gender mainstreaming in the Network

Moderator: Isaías Barreñada

Marit Flø Jørgensen presented the 6.2 *Outline of a Strategy for the EuroMed Rights Programme on Women's Rights and Gender Equality 2016-2018*, and the 6.3 *EuroMed Rights' strategy to promote gender equality and women's rights in the Euro-Med region 2016-2018*. She noted that the gender programme has two dimensions, i.e. to integrate gender in all Network activities transversally, and to address violence against women. The two Strategies would be followed by a Work Plan.

Following the presentation, Anitta Kynsilehto reminded the EC that it had been noted at the last EC meeting on 5-7 February 2016 that gender equality is broader than women's rights. Since the term "gender equality" is used by the Working Group, she would like to see it reflected in the two Strategies and thus include women, men and transgender. She was therefore asking how the Working Group is approaching the issue of intersectionality (the crossing of gender with other axes of social boundaries). Søs Nissen also suggested including intersectionality, when the 6.1 *Gender Equality Policy Paper (GEPP)* is updated. Marit Flø Jørgensen answered that the issue of intersectionality had been discussed in the Working Group and although that it might not be reflected clearly in the documents, this issue was one of the reasons why the 6.1 *Gender Equality Policy Paper (GEPP)* would be updated. Anitta Kynsilehto suggested having intersectionality mainstreamed in the different Working Groups so they would take this issue into account, as well to update the Strategies to include the issue of intersectionality. She furthermore suggested reflecting on a different activity than the study about refugee women as a similar study had already been carried out in 2008.

Messaoud Romdhani noted that, in Tunisia, violence against women is increasing since the revolution, and that more than 50% of the Tunisian women are affected by violence. According to EuroMed Rights' report on Violence against Women in the EuroMed, violence is at the raise at both sides of the Mediterranean, and he suggested to focus on this issue. Catherine Teule agreed with Messaoud Romdhani that the most relevant theme in relation to gender is violence against women that leads to inequality. It should be a cross cutting theme for all the Working Groups so it would also include migrant women. She suggested that the added value of the Network could be to build the capacity of the Network's members on the issue of violence against women. Marit Flø Jørgensen agreed with Catherine Teule that the Network should be a resource hub where members can ask for assistance. The needed resources should however be available and the Network should make use of member organisations that have this capacity.

Michel Tubiana noted that, in the North there are some state structures that are against the discrimination of women – whereas in the South, there are legislations against women. The issues in the North cannot be

transferred to the South, and vice versa, he noted. Michel Tubiana added that the gender perspective is not only about equality between men and women but the relation between men and women in different societies.

Wadih Al-Asmar also thought that the Network should be careful not to confuse problematics at different levels in the North and the South; the same logic does not prevail in the South and the North where the rights are guaranteed by the Constitutions. He thought that the NGOs are trying to impose some problematics that are not seen as a priority by the people, also in the North. If the Network wants to work on other topics related to gender, Wadih Al-Asmar thought that it should do this in parallel and not add them to the Women's rights Working Group.

Raffaella Bolini noted that even inside the feminist groups and LGBT movements in the North and the South, there is an ongoing debate about gender and equality. The conditions might be different in the North and the South but the debate is not that different. The Network should see how it can bring added value, and she suggested having a political debate on gender culture.

In relation to the targets that the Network could influence, Osman İşçi suggested to include the Special Rapporteur on violence against women who has been in the EuroMed region for the past five years. Also local organisations that are not necessarily members of the Network could be consulted for input, which could also be included in the Strategies.

Marc Schade-Poulsen questioned how the Network could work on the UN Council Resolution 1325 as an instrument. He noted that women should be included in the peace negotiations so they are not marginalised afterwards. As regards the UN Council Resolution 1325, Marit Flø Jørgensen informed that the Working Group had not finished the discussion on this issue but that the participants had acknowledged that women are more and more involved in the different conflicts and less and less involved in the legislations. She noted that in relation to the programme on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians, experience had shown that it was interesting to work on occupation through the gender angle. The Network should thus see when it is relevant to work on the gender perspective in the different thematic Working Groups.

Finally, Marit Flø Jørgensen noted that the Working Group includes both gender equality and women's rights as there are issues pertaining to women's rights that need to be addressed as such. She added that the Working Group would discuss the issue of intersectionality, as well as define its work on refugees which was not yet clear yet.

Decisions:

- The Outline of a Strategy for the EuroMed Rights Programme on Women's Rights and Gender Equality 2016-2018 was approved
- EuroMed Rights' Strategy to promote gender equality and women's rights in the Euro-Med region 2016-2018 was approved
- The issue of intersectionality and the UN Council Resolution 1325 should be added to the two Strategies

Documents:

6.1 Gender Equality Policy Paper (GEPP) (*for information*)

6.2 Outline of a Strategy for the EuroMed Rights Programme on Women's Rights and Gender Equality 2016-2018 (*for approval*)

6.3 EuroMed Rights' strategy to promote gender equality and women's rights in the Euro-Med region 2016-2018 (*for approval*)

7. Shrinking spaces: follow-up to the seminar and Working Group meeting

Moderator: Søs Nissen

Osman İşçi, presented the *7.1 Discussion paper for a programme strategy 2016-2018*.

Following the presentation, Michel Tubiana noted that, along with the issue of shrinking spaces, the issue of surveillance of human rights defenders should be tackled, including phone tapping. He also noted that, in

France, some religious associations have been dissolved in the framework of the emergency law which is an alarming trend. He would also like the Network to approach this issue.

Isaías Barreñada noted that so far, the Working Group on FOAA had not only included civil society in its work but also social movements that are not considered to be part of civil society in the strict sense of the word. Looking at the Discussion paper, he did not see a difference between the previous and the coming activities and he suggested tackling the issue of shrinking spaces from a different perspective, as well as emphasizing the difference in the discourse on civil society and their practice on the ground.

Marc Schade-Poulsen thought that the Network could focus on whether the EU is complying with its own instruments, being road maps, strategies, and means for structured dialogue. The seminar on shrinking spaces held in Brussels in May 2016 had however shown that the participants are not interested in doing this work but that they would rather exchange with each other although there is not enough capacity among the organisations to support each other. Other issues to be considered within the programme is the anti-terror fight that is a major issue in Turkey, as well as the court cases against people in Europe who have been helping refugees. The challenge is that it is not clear where/ to whom the Network can address messages of concern at the regional level.

According to Wadih Al-Asmar, the Network needs to have a dialogue with the EU institutions on the fact that, all over the region, civil society is losing its ground. He thought that the added value of the Working Group could be to monitor the EU Delegations' work in the different countries and for instance publish a report on their relation with civil society. This report could be presented to the EU by the political referent on FOAA who would raise the issue of civil society's shrinking spaces on a yearly basis. Søs Nissen agreed with Wadih Al-Asmar to focus on the EU institutions and the structured dialogue, and she thought that it would be important to find out who is working on the issue of civil society's shrinking spaces.

Catherine Teule thought that the protection of human rights defenders is an important issue. She thought that the added value of the Network could be to remind the EU institutions of the importance of consulting civil society in any decision making process, in the South as well as the North. She noted that the issue of surveillance of human rights defenders is a complex issue that however deserves the Network's attention.

Osman İşçi informed that Frontline Defenders has a special training programme on surveillance and the use of digital devices that is open to everyone and that could be considered by the Network. He agreed with Wadih Al-Asmar that monitoring the EU could be considered as an issue although Amnesty International is already working on this issue.

In relation to the seminar on shrinking spaces, Wadih Al-Asmar asked how the speakers and participants had been selected, and what the outcome had been of the seminar. Osman İşçi informed that the Working Group members had been contacted in relation to the seminar, but for the annual seminar, he suggested instead to set up some criteria for the nomination of speakers/ participants according to the content of the seminar. Søs Nissen suggested to link these criteria to the focus of the strategy so the nomination of participants are individuals/ organisations interested in carrying out the activities of the strategy.

Søs Nissen asked whether the members of the Network are aware of the work of the EMHRF and know what the Foundation can provide to them in terms of support. Marc Schade-Poulsen answered that the members do know the EMHRF but that the Foundation does not do advocacy or public statements, and EuroMed Rights and EMHRF complement their respective work.

Søs Nissen suggested continuing the discussions on how to work on FOAA at another meeting, as some issues need a deeper discussion, in particular the activities related to the North. Osman İşçi would forward the comments of the EC to the Programme Officer and ensure that an updated version is drafted accordingly.

Document:

7.1 Discussion paper for a programme strategy 2016-2018 (*for discussion*)

8. Follow-up to the EC's internal communication

Moderator: Catherine Teule

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the EC's internal communication via Outlook is not yet up and running. Michel Tubiana asked whether it would be necessary to handle two mail boxes, or whether emails from Outlook could be directed to his current mail box. Osman İşçi confirmed that the latter would be possible.

Wadih Al-Asmar said that he thought that the most important feature in Outlook would be to work on documents. In order to make the tool useful, Wadih Al-Asmar suggested to ask the Secretariat to sit with each EC member for 15 minutes at the next EC meeting in order to install what is necessary to launch the communication tool.

Decision:

- At the next EC meeting on 23-25 September 2016, the Secretariat will make sure that all EC members have installed what is necessary to launch Outlook as their internal communication tool

9. Migration: follow-up to the Migration Working Group meeting

Moderator: Wadih Al-Asmar

Anitta Kynsilehto presented the *9.1 Draft 2016-2018 strategy* and the *9.2 Political positioning on migration and asylum issues*. She asked the EC members whether there is a need to define the limits for access to mobility – or simply to advocate access to mobility without defining its limitations, as it has been the case so far. In relation to the access to EU territory for refugees who need protection, she furthermore asked which practical steps, the Network is suggesting in order to use the existing channels more effectively (humanitarian corridors, access to asylum in embassies, and temporary protection). Marc Schade-Poulsen also asked the EC whether the Network should receive money from the EU in relation to call for proposals that aim at keeping the migrants outside the EU.

Catherine Teule added that some members feel that there is a contradiction between the call for liberalisation of visa – as it is a kind of recognition of this obstacle - and the call for free mobility; the Network should thus clarify its position on the access to mobility as asked by Anitta Kynsilehto. As an answer to Marc Schade-Poulsen's question, she thought that the Network should reject EU funding or projects that aim at keeping the migrants away from Europe. She furthermore noted that, in the Working Group, obstacles that hinder the migrants' access to economic and social rights had been discussed (and fact sheets tentatively elaborated), and that a specific project on this issue seemed to go beyond the means and interest of the Working Group members. On the other hand, the issue of economic, social and cultural rights, as the gender issue, should be underlying issues in the work and reflections of the Working Group.

Mesaoud Romdhani noted that a lot of organisations and trade unions in Tunisia, including the UGTT, look at the issue of migration from the perspective of the Free Trade Agreement. He added that the ecosoc rights in the country of origin are important as the migrants would not have left their country if they had access to work. Anitta Kynsilehto noted that the issue of claiming asylum status in order to work in another country is a very difficult topic.

Isaías Barreñada suggested both to include a critical analysis of the EU's agreements but also the underlying agreements, i.e. the national agreements and regional bilateral agreements, in the Strategy, as these agreements are used to justify the externalisation of the EU's migration policies. Catherine Teule answered that these agreements in the region would also be integrated in the critical analysis of the EU agreements. She noted that the externalisation of the EU's migration policies is leading to a constant violation of the rights of migrants.

Marc Schade-Poulsen asked whether the Working Group would work on humanitarian corridors, temporary protection and temporary admission, as included in the *9.2 Political positioning on migration and asylum issues*. Anitta Kynsilehto noted that it is unclear how the Working Group should work on these issues in

practice. If considering the situation in Syria, there are no legal channels, however there is consensus that something should be done as the situation of the refugees in Syria is intolerable. For example, Turkey is keeping people inside Syria. Catherine Teule noted that there is a difference between humanitarian corridors and temporary protection; the latter should apply when massive flows arrive to the borders, for instance as in 2011 where the Tunisians were granted the right to residence - and access to work - for a year (eventually renewable) and they were allowed to ask for asylum. As regards temporary protection, Marc Schade-Poulsen thought a debate should be launched in Europe on how to manage the migrant flows.

Michel Tubiana noted that the current migration situation is the worst in the last 20 years, and the governments do not want to face the situation as it is, being afraid of the public opinion. In Europe, there are some solidarity movements but they will not be able to change the situation. He noted that it is important to distinguish between asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, being often confused by the governments. Michel Tubiana added that the EU migratory policies are all about closing borders, and the Network has to fight for the freedom of mobility, suppress short term visas, and not accept the partnerships for mobility concluded within the EU. According to Michel Tubiana, it is absurd that goods – but not people - can circulate freely. Raffaella Bolini noted that the objective of the externalisation policies is to stop the migrants on their way to Europe. She thought that the Network should monitor and denounce the agreements with the dictatorships and regimes that violate human rights as well as inform the public about these agreements.

In line with Messaoud Romdhani's comment, Isaías Barreñada noted that the ecosoc rights in the Northern countries attract migrants, and he suggested to analyse the ecosoc rights (right to employment etc.) in some countries in conflicts. Unlike Michel Tubiana, he was not sure that Europe has closed its borders, some countries being ready to open their doors to migrants with a specific profile, which however touches upon the issue of discrimination. For instance in Spain, the government has granted residency to 1 million people. Michel Tubiana agreed to have a critical analysis of the situation in the countries of origin. Osman İççi noted that, in terms of discrimination, unemployment etc., the North is not to be considered as a safe place either.

Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that the test is to see whether the governments are ready to uphold human rights in relation to migrants and refugees as rights adherence is at test when it is difficult to do so. He expressed his concern that EuroMed Rights would be marginalised if the Network does not develop its principal standards, participate in the debate, and for instance come up with arguments against the fear to open the borders. In relation to readmission agreements, the Network should also flag out that a country should not deny the return of one of its nationals if it is safe for s/he to return to the home country. Anitta Kynsilehto noted that the counter argument to the fear of opening borders is that the current system does not work. Additional arguments could also be developed.

In relation to political and civil rights, Moataz El Fegiery noted that for instance Libyans would not be able to have political activities in Tunisia. Tunisia or any other country in Africa would not be able to provide protection, and the relocation of human rights defenders in the South is not feasible. The root cause of the migration is that Egypt is collapsing and that there has been a conflict in Syria for five years. In order to achieve stability in Europe, some kind of political and strategic thinking that takes into consideration the conditions in the South is needed.

Catherine Teule asked whether it would be possible to present it as a demand that the EuroMed region becomes an area with free circulation as the Schengen area. She added that, besides the right to asylum, the family reunification is under severe threat now and should be included in the Network's position. Michel Tubiana agreed saying that the family reunification is a non-negotiable right. He added that the democracy in Europe is threatened, and there is an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance in Europe. He thought that the issue of liberalisation of visa remains problematic but the Network could say that the people of the EuroMed region need protection and that the abolition of visa is therefore needed for this region. The Network should affirm that it is in favour of the free movement of people and it will hold the states accountable for this freedom - while respecting the sovereignty of the national states.

Anitta Kynsilehto did not think that the Network should promote the right of the state as suggested by Marc Schade-Poulsen. Isaías Barreñada did however not agree with Anitta Kynsilehto that the rights of the state should not be defended, and the Network should not avoid difficult issues in the name of national sovereignty. Michel Tubiana added that the Network should hold the states accountable for the rule of law and the implementation of the laws. He added that the concept of safe countries goes against the values that the Network believes in.

Marc Schade-Poulsen raised the issue of how to handle criminals that apply for asylum without being granted it, but who then stay for 9 months in the country while receiving money from the state. Anitta Kynsilehto did not think that the Network should give the states advice on how to deport people. According to her, the delinquency should be treated by the correctional system without using it as an excuse for expulsions.

Finally, Marc Schade-Poulsen suggested to include the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families as reference instrument in the Strategy. In relation to safe countries (Objective 1 in the Strategy), he also pointed out that ecosoc rights (Objective 2) are already included implicitly under this point, being human security, right to education etc. Anitta Kynsilehto said that they would take out Objective 2 of the Strategy, i.e. Promoting access to economic and social rights for migrants and refugees.

Decision:

- The Draft 2016-2018 Strategy was approved (after some amendments).

Documents:

9.1 Draft 2016-2018 Strategy (*for approval*)

9.2 Political positioning on migration and asylum issues (*for discussion*)

10. Membership issues

Moderator: Messaoud Romdhani

Decisions:

- The Portuguese Human Rights League, Portugal, was accepted as a Regular member.

Documents:

10.1 Membership application from the Portuguese Human Rights League, Portugal (*for approval*)

10.2 Overview of Members (*for information*)

10.3 Overview of Membership applications (*for information*)

11. Miscellaneous

Moderator: Messaoud Romdhani

Date for the next Executive Committee meeting:

Decision:

- The next EC meeting will take place on 23-25 September 2016 (the venue to be decided upon).