



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

EMHRN STRATEGY DOCUMENT 2012-2018

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INTRODUCTION

The present document outlines the strategy of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) for the period of 2012-2018. The document aims at communicating effectively EMHRN objectives and methodologies within its membership as well as to the outside world. It seeks to develop new synergies, partnerships and internal communication by offering a shared vision of the network, its values and objectives.

The document is divided into five parts:

- the first part provides a general presentation of the EMHRN's mission, values and objectives
- the second part analyses the current situation in the Euro-Mediterranean region and challenges facing the EMHRN
- the third part describes the EMHRN response to the challenges described in part 2
- the fourth part describes working methods
- Finally, the EMHRN's history and organisational build-up is outlined in Annex A

The strategy provides the overall direction for EMHRN work¹. It will be translated into programmes outlining in greater detail the chosen interventions implementing the strategy.

PART 1: EMHRN MISSION, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Introduction, Context and Background

The EMHRN is an independent network of human rights organisations and institutions adhering to international human rights standards, international humanitarian law and democratic principles. The EMHRN's work is based on and rooted in all regional and international human rights texts and conventions.

The EMHRN is a regional network and its geographical mandate covers the EU and the EU's Southern Mediterranean Neighbours plus Turkey ('the EuroMed region'). This is where the main bulk of its work lies, while the EMHRN also remains concerned with developments internationally or outside the region having an impact on human rights.

The EMHRN and its members are actors in the region and recognise the impact that regional civil society cooperation can have on the situation of human rights and democracy on the ground. In this spirit, the Network is concerned both with the policies implemented in the North, South and East of the Mediterranean Sea and with policies governing relations between the shores.

The EMHRN and its members, together and individually, are part of the social movements of the region and the countries involved. It promotes networking amongst its member organisations without substituting these. At their request and within its means, the Network provides them the assistance they may wish for.

¹ The current draft is based on a yearlong process that will lead to the 9th EMHRN General Assembly in Copenhagen in 2012. It included broad consultation with EMHRN members, one element being a questionnaire on the future work of the EMHRN that was forwarded to the members in late 2010.¹ 55 (out of 110) responded to the questionnaire. The answers were subsequently analysed with the assistance of an independent consultant upon which a first draft strategy was finalised.

The EMHRN works to promote and protect human rights defenders and civil society, to develop reform programmes, to do advocacy, including awareness raising about human rights problems, and to conduct capacity building of civil society and of EMHRN members.

It is committed to critical engagement with governments and intergovernmental bodies and it also maintains relations with socio-political actors such as political parties and trade unions.

1.2 The EMHRN Mission and Vision

The mission of the EMHRN is to promote and strengthen human rights and democratic reform within its regional mandate through civil society networking and cooperation. Rooted in civil society, the Network seeks to develop and strengthen partnerships between NGOs in the EuroMed region, disseminate human rights values, advocate for these and increase capacities in this regard.

As such, the EMHRN's vision is to be a regional human rights forum that is a major source of knowledge and action on human rights and democratic reform in the EuroMed region.

1.3 Key Values of the Network

Key values that guide and shape the Network are interrelated and include the following:

- the importance of recognising and promoting the fundamental universality, indivisibility, interdependency and interrelation of human rights, individual as well as collective rights;
- respect for democratic principles and the rule of law as outlined in various international conventions and humanitarian law;
- the importance of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights and the right for civil society to be an active partner in this agenda;
- the value and benefit of a plurality of approaches to human rights as well as of dialogue and the promotion of intercultural understanding;
- the right to popular participation and ownership in shaping human rights agendas throughout the region;
- the importance of rooting work in the social context in which human rights values are expressed

Gender equality and the importance of highlighting and actively promoting the rights of women and women's participation in public life is a key value of the EMHRN. Hence work within and outside the Network, as well as its organisational methods, aims at meeting gender mainstreaming criteria with the view of obtaining real gender equality. In this regard, the Network develops specific actions aimed at concretely promoting gender equality in the region based on its Policy Paper on Gender Equality². This paper is thus an integrated part of the EMHRN's strategy.

1.4 General Objectives of the Network

The Network's statutory key objectives include the following³.

- To support and promote within the relevant States the universal principles of Human Rights as established by all the international instruments.
- To work in support for the development of democratic institutions and the promotion of the Rule of law, in particular freedom of association, equality between men and women, sustainable development and respect for economic and social rights.

² <http://www.euomedrights.org/gender/about-gender/work-plan-strategy/10302.html>

³ See Annex B for the wording of the statutes

- To fight against discrimination, war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- To support existing non-governmental organisations, the creation of independent and autonomous non-governmental organisations; to strengthen the capacity of civil society and support, assist and co-ordinate the efforts of its members.
- To support and protect human rights defenders whose rights are violated
- To promote human rights education and to act in favour of peace and the right of peoples to manage their own destinies.
- To promote dialogue and solidarity between peoples and cultures.

1.5 EMHRN offers to its members

In general the EMHRN offers its members

- Access to human rights NGOs in thirty countries including increased possibility for coordination and cooperation
- Access to governmental and inter-governmental institutions and policy processes
- Possibility to influence regional policies and debates
- Increased protection where members or their work are at risk
- International/ regional support to their work within the EMHRN fields of priority
- Capacity building activities within the EMHRN's fields of priority
- Dissemination of their work to a broad regional audience
- A blue print by being recognised as EMHRN member by 70 leading human rights NGOs in the region

PART 2: THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION AND THE CHALLENGES FACING THE EMHRN

2.1 The Euro-Mediterranean region in a process of change

The region the EMHRN is working in since 1997 has changed radically after the onset of the revolution in Tunisia in December 2010 that triggered a wind of change for democracy.

The South Mediterranean region was never a homogenous entity, however in terms of democracy deficits, of systematic oppression and violation of basic human rights it could be considered a rather uniform geo-political area.

The political systems seemed frozen with increased focus by the regimes on control of cyber space, freedom of assembly and association, as well as the judiciary and the law enforcing system. The governments did not live up to their commitments to fight discrimination against women. A propelled atmosphere of inward-looking intolerance contrary to a culture of human rights covered up for the fact that a large majority of people were longing for a life in freedom and dignity.

Civil society remained weak and heavily monitored by security services. Efforts to create alliances between political and civil society forces were met with immediate oppression.

In sum, no democracies appeared to emerge from the Arab region and although ageing presidents were to be replaced in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria it seemed unlikely that changes in the top of the regimes would lead to democracy or human rights improvements.

The revolutionary moments and uprisings dramatically changed this political landscape. They were led mostly by young people, men and women, in a quest for the respect of their inherent dignity and worth, for social, economic and political justice. They used social media whose stories were taken up by satellite channels. They took the security services by surprise and found unexpected alliances in the ruling classes and the army that were displeased with the authoritarian rulers' governance and handing over of power to their nearest and corrupt families and followers.

An important element in the uprisings were that the citizens had overcome their fear and dared defy dictatorship, while civil society groups were there to give political voice to the movement. Another significant feature was people's sense of responsibility that this historic momentum should not be lost; and their trust in own capacity to steer a home grown movement.

The people of Tunisia and Egypt inspired the populations in the Arab region and the rest of the world. Two countries (Syria and Libya) became the scene for civil war like situations and armed struggle – NATO forces intervening with a UN mandate in Libya - where the rulers did not hesitate in committing war crimes and crimes against humanities. In other countries top-down constitutional reform processes were considered or initiated.

Also the institutional framework defining the EuroMed region clearly changed: Two years before the start of the Arab Spring, the Barcelona process was replaced by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The former had not helped improving the human rights situation, but nevertheless provided a platform for human rights and civil society work through its institutional set-up. In 2008, however, when the UfM was established, the human rights dimension of the EuroMed process more or less disappeared except for a timid commitment to promote equality between men and women through the Istanbul-Marrakech Process.

Before that, after EU enlargement in 2004, the European Neighbourhood Policy focussing on bi-lateral relations had become the main political and economic vehicle for EU cooperation with its Mediterranean partners.

The EU Commission developed a number of mechanisms within this framework such as human rights sub-committees and annual progress reports. Yet, at the time of start of the revolutions bi-lateral action plans and national indicative programs had become more accommodating to the South Mediterranean regimes than pro-actively promoting genuine reforms. Despite gross human rights violations, regimes in the South received significant economic and political support from the EU and EU member states.

It took time and hesitation - that was noted and ill perceived by the populations in the South - for the EU to engage in a *mea culpa* about its past policies. It started revising its policies by further diversifying its bi-lateral approach declaring that increased support should be conditional on progress in building and consolidating democracy and respect for the rule of law. Some countries may now in principle face negative conditionality, i.e. diminished financial support; others again may face targeted sanctions. In general, EU foreign human rights and democracy policies remain weak after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. In addition, the Union for the Mediterranean is almost reduced to a project office based on a principle of variable geometry depending on the countries' needs and interest. Hence, the regional institutional set-up that triggered the establishing of a human rights network in the EuroMed region has become close to politically irrelevant.

2.2 Challenges facing EMHRN work in the region

New positive trends have emerged in the EuroMed region as emphasised above. However this being said many of the past human rights characteristics of the region are still topical:

Despite new avenues for democracy in the South there is still resistance to change among segments of the societies in question and support for transition processes is not unanimous.

Issues as the lack of respect for fundamental freedoms, the independence of the judiciary, women's rights and gender equality, and of migrants' and refugees' rights remain characteristic features of the region as well as lack of respect for economic and social and cultural rights. The opening of the political spheres and the rise to legislative power of Islamist parties give rise to concern e.g. about the protection of freedom of expression and women's rights. Religiously motivated encroachments on the freedom of conscience is widespread, as well as the lack of acknowledging rights to diversity.

Also the conflicts are still very present. The Middle East peace talks are blocked while the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem and violations of international humanitarian law has steadily intensified. The Kurdish and Western Sahara conflicts remain, and Cyprus is left divided.

In Europe attacks on migrant and refugee rights remain key issues. Racism and xenophobia are salient features of European societies, in particular manifested through the rise of the extreme right wing parties and Islamophobia. Inequalities between men and women, and between social classes, continue to persist, as well as attacks on individual freedoms, such as fair trial procedures, increased surveillance of the private spheres, etc. In times of growing, economic crisis some of these tensions and inequalities have increased and are acerbated by the criminalizing of demonstrators and police brutality against social protesters.

While Europe and its decision makers in many ways welcomed the changes in the South old mind sets remain intermingled with 'soft security' concerns and self-interested economic, geopolitical and energy safety thinking.

Seen from a regional perspective the Euro-Mediterranean area remains asymmetric in the sense that in the EU one finds predominantly stable, affluent, democratic, and overall human rights abiding societies with a civil society that is free to act while in the South and East Mediterranean one finds less affluent, conflict ridden, previously mostly non-democratic, countries suffering from high unemployment rates, important percentages of populations living in poverty and economic inequality which now are on the move while large scale human rights violations prevail.

EuroMed economic and social relations also remain asymmetrical. Inequalities have not diminished since the start of the Barcelona process and the EU still benefits much more from regional cooperation than the South. Deficits in people's economic and social rights remain sources of social tension that threaten to increase with the further instalment of the EuroMed Free Trade Zone.

In addition to these elements human rights organisations, despite the important role they play, remain relatively weak. In several countries of the South they are still heavily oppressed while in others they have to tackle the challenges that have arisen from the new situations, including attacks from religious groups. In Europe, civil society groups dealing with the Arab world and the Mediterranean region from a human rights perspective remain few and need more resources to get their voices heard in the public debate.

In general, while human rights values are at the heart of social movements' concerns, the human rights organisations face the task of connecting to the broader segments of the societies to which they belong as well as defining their relation to religion based parties.

The EMHRN will continue to work in an environment where key issues remain unchanged from before the revolutions. In addition it will have to face *three challenges* arising from the changes in the region.

The *first challenge* consists in the fact that the geo-political entity in relation to which the Network was created and gained its identity has almost disappeared – except on paper. Said in a practical way, there is today almost no one at the receiving end for dialogue, advocacy or regional reporting on regional EuroMed human rights and democracy issues. At the same time the EU institutions are in crisis facing huge difficulties to collectively overcoming the economic crisis facing several member states

Hence, the EMHRN's *raison d'être* can no longer be derived from the Barcelona process or the UfM and the institutional set-up for advocacy that it provided (ministerial meetings, ambassador meetings etc.). Although the EMHRN's identity and regional mandate will remain historically rooted in the Barcelona process, and although its geographical mandate will remain unchanged, future work can solely be built on the fact that human rights organisations in the EU and South and East Mediterranean believe in a common destiny, wish to work together, learn from one another and help one another in protecting and promoting human rights around the Mediterranean and in the EU. Social actors in the EuroMed region have consolidated this vision as exemplified by the references made to the revolutions in the Arab world by protesters in Spain, Portugal and Greece.

Closely linked to the first challenge is the *second challenge* consisting in the fact that the South Mediterranean region is even less homogeneous than before. Up to the start of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia the South and East Mediterranean region, in particular the Arab countries, without being uniform could be said to be characterised by the more or less same oppressive regimes, the same lack of fundamental freedoms, gender inequalities, dependent and partial judiciaries, dominant security apparatuses, wide spread torture, etc.

The changes produced by the revolutions imply that the situation now varies significantly from one country to another. Hence no uniform approach can be taken to the region. The EMHRN will therefore have to adopt a more diversified approach than in the past also because the situation in each country most likely will change frequently with set-backs, steps forward, etc. As a part of this adaption the EMHRN and its members will have to deal with human rights in transition processes and in democracy building, including gender equality and women's rights and participation, to which they were not accustomed in the past

The *third challenge* (linked to the previous ones) lies in the need to deal with the fact that the EMHRN gains its strength and cohesion from being a regional, transnational organisation while at the same time most influential political processes take place at national and bi-lateral levels between the EU and its Southern Neighbours.

PART 3: EMHRN ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGES

The EMHRN has built a solid experience in working with many of the thematic issues addressed above.

At its General Assemblies in Madrid, 2006, and Barcelona 2008, the EMHRN identified Freedom of Association; The Independence and Impartiality of the Judiciary; Women's Rights and Gender Mainstreaming; and Human Rights Education as strategic entry points to work on democratisation, as well as the Middle East Conflict; The Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers; and Economic and Social Rights as core themes for regional work on security of human beings.

It is worthwhile noting that the members' response to the questionnaire, forwarded in 2010, about the future EMHRN strategy indicated that the above mentioned thematic issues with which the EMHRN dealt with in the past remain valid for them and for the region also now and in the future.

There are many issues to tackle in the region and the range of topics the EMHRN can work on is vast since e.g. also freedom of conscience, racism and discrimination and the rights to diversity could be added on top of the items listed above.

The General Assemblies further agreed to develop the thematic working groups as a core methodology of the EMHRN to be sustained by advocacy activities, solidarity missions, partnership building, communication activities, etc.

Hence, the EMHRN has many working methods at its disposal: a) Meetings of thematic working groups; b) Ad hoc groups (including solidarity groups); c) Advocacy; d) Missions; e) Reports; f) Training; g) Campaigns; h) High level seminars/ meetings; i) Media, including social media, external communication; j) Internal communication; k) Outreach to / alliance building with other groups/movements. Also here it is important to be clear about how and when to use the different tools.

Because of the wide range of topics it is important to prioritise. The EMHRN will do this by 1) building on lessons learned and best practices gained from past work, 2) avoiding duplicating the work of other organisations, and 3) adapting its strategy to the new challenges mentioned above.

The leading thread in the EMHRN's work will be to promote and protect human rights and rule of law through networking and partnerships, supporting its members' activities where the Network can bring in added value, and protecting its members and partners where they or their work are at risk.

Below follows the outline of the EMHRN's main strategic areas of work in the next 6 years. These will subsequently be translated into specific work programs.

3.1 Regional and National Approaches

The EMHRN has in the past prioritised regional thematic work while seeking to develop ad hoc activities and policies aimed at country levels.

The EMHRN will in the future strengthen its regional identity by sharpening the profile of its thematic work while increasingly and systematically linking work at regional level with work at country level and on bi-lateral relations between the EU and each Mediterranean Partner.

An inherent aim of the thematic work is to address and highlight human rights issues of regional concern. Another aim is to support EMHRN members in their work at national level within the EMHRN's thematic priority areas.

Hence, in addition to remaining a network addressing regional issues in the EuroMed region, the EMHRN will also respond to the fact that most reform work related to human rights, the reinforcement of rule of law and the protection of human rights is taking place at national/ bi-lateral levels. It will also respond to the fact that the region is far less uniform than before and that the situation in the individual countries is likely to remain volatile in the future as some countries may move from transition to authoritarian rule; others from civil war to transition; some political systems will remain frozen; etc.

3.2 Regional Thematic Approaches

Regional work will remain high on the EMHRN's agenda in the coming years. In order to highlight cross regional human rights issues, to maintain a regional perspective on the situation in the different countries and to support its country work, the EMHRN will develop thematic work on six issues.

1) Legislative and Judicial Reform, and Democratic Transition; 2) *Conflict situations and the respect for human rights, international and international humanitarian law (IHL)*; 3) Women's Rights and Gender Equality; 4) Anti-discrimination and Freedom of Conscience; 5) The Rights of Migrants and Refugees, and 6) Economic and Social Rights.

3.2.1 Democratic Transition, Legislative and Judicial Reform

In a number of countries of the South and East Mediterranean, human rights organisations' spaces for manoeuvre are limited by strictly monitored red lines for enjoying public freedoms. In other countries they are kept under tight control by authoritarian rulers and security services. Finally, in some countries human rights organisations are involved in broader, popular processes of transition towards democracy.

Common for all these situations is the question of the access to an independent judiciary and the need for legislative reform to ensure the protection or reinforcement of human rights respect and the rule of law.

In order to address these issues the EMHRN will develop regional work on Democratic Transition, *Legislative and Judicial Reform* (based amongst other on its past Freedom of Association and Justice work). This work will aim at

- promoting regional exchanges of experience and regional perspectives and policies on legislation and practices regarding fundamental freedoms, judicial reform and justice in countries of transition
- looking into how civil society in one country can benefit from experiences in other countries
- developing policies, advocacy and support initiatives, missions, aimed at supporting the work of human rights defenders working at national level
- contributing to protect human rights activists and members of the legal profession where they or their work are at risk
- In general liaise with other actors in the field (social movements, parliamentarians, bar associations, judges associations, agencies, political parties, etc.)
- suggest fields of intervention where a specific gender perspective is needed

This work will primarily concern the South and East Mediterranean where reforms are the most urgently needed. Hence, this work will be part of the EMHRN's efforts to contribute at reducing the asymmetry between the North and South in terms of democracy and human rights respect. However, legal and judicial concerns pertaining to Europe can and should also be raised such as anti-terror measures and legislation, personal data control, etc.

The objectives over the next 6 years would be for EMHRN to become a main point of encounter for human rights NGOs engaged in legal and judicial reform processes mainly addressing the South and East Mediterranean. It should become a major regional source of expertise, conducting awareness raising and policy proposals on human rights and democratic reform capable of influencing regional dynamics as well as of supporting human rights organisations in their work at national level all through strategically chosen interventions catering to the needs of the particular context in question.

In the EuroMed region there are fields where human rights issues in the North and the South are more symmetrically and intrinsically interlinked and areas where human rights concerns are similar and of immediate concern for civil society in both Europe and the South and East of the Mediterranean in their national as well as regional dimension.

This is the case for the other four themes that the EMHRN will address.

3.2.2 Conflict situations and the respect for human rights, international law and international humanitarian law (IHL)

In several countries of the South and East Mediterranean, human rights organisations have to work under conflict situations/ or occupation that impact largely on all aspects of the populations' lives and

on human rights work. These conflicts have negative human rights, security and political repercussions far beyond their confines, not the least the Middle East conflict.

The EMHRN's work will in this regard further develop its regional activities on *conflict situations and the respect for international and international humanitarian law (IHL)*, in particular the work on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians. The EMHRN will

- Continue the work of gathering EMHRN's Israeli and Palestinian members, other EMHRN members plus resource organisations in order to contribute to setting human rights and IHL respect at the heart of Peace promotion
- Offer access of its members to the EU, to EU member states and UN instruments in order to advocate for setting respect for human rights and IHL at the heart of peace efforts
- Strengthen the interface work between Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations and European civil society influencing EU policies pertaining to Israel and Palestine
- Provide solidarity and protection work for human rights activists and organisations engaged in work on the Middle East conflict
- As in all its work strive to ensure that gender perspectives are integrated in its activities

In addition, the EMHRN will extend contacts to human rights activists engaged in other conflicts or situations of occupation and look into how they and EMHRN members can mutually benefit from one another's' experience.

The overall objective for the next 6 years will in this way be to assist human rights defenders and human rights organisations in building strong regional alliances/ networks aimed at influencing state actors and the EU in setting human rights and IHL respect at the heart of Peace talks, conflict management and resolution. The EMHRN should become a focal point for European civil society lobbying for promoting human rights, international law and IHL perspectives on the Middle East Conflict. It should initiate a process enabling it to be more pro-active on other conflict situations. It will also seek to provide human rights defenders and human rights organisations with maximum protection from personal attacks and harassment of their work.

3.2.3 Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Obviously there are wide differences between Europe and the South and East Mediterranean in terms of respect for women's rights. The rise of Islamist groups at Parliamentary elections that question the universality of women's equal rights with men, family codes based on religious affiliation, the fact that the MENA falls behind the rest of the world in terms of women's participation in the work force, as well as MENA governments' persistent reservations to key articles of the CEDAW are indications of discrepancies between Europe and the South, hence a need for a major focus on the latter when it comes to human rights work.

However, women in the North and South do face a number of common problems such as violence against women in public and private spheres and the lack of equal representation and wages with men in public and work life. The majority of migrants in the region today are women facing double discrimination and wide exploitation. Debates related to the relation between religion and women's rights are also common in the whole region such as those on the wearing of the veil.

Hence it makes sense that women in the region join forces to claim equal rights and affirmative action, and it makes sense for women's rights defenders and gender equality promoters (men and women alike) to network, exchange, and develop cooperation and campaigns.

The EMHRN will pursue its past work on women's rights and gender equality gathering members and resource persons/ organisations actively engaged in promoting women's rights and gender equality. It will:

- Strengthen networking between NGOs in the EuroMed region dealing with women's rights and gender equality issues while at the same time promote cooperation with generalist human rights NGOs.
- Monitor national and regional policies on women's rights and gender equality
- Raise awareness about gender discrimination in the region
- Engage in dialogue with governments, regional and intergovernmental institutions on questions relating to women's rights and gender equality
- Support and stimulate regional and national campaigns aimed at equal rights for women and men in legislation and practice
- Support women's rights defenders' fight for gender equality in countries in transition or where legislative, political, social and/ or economic reform is under way
- Contribute to protecting women rights activists where they or their work are at risk
- In general liaise with other actors in the field (social movements, parliamentarians, agencies and foundations, trade unions, political parties)
- Support gender mainstreaming efforts in the region and conduct training in this regard including internally in the EMHRN

The overall objective over the next 6 years for the EMHRN is, while building on its past work, to strengthen its role as a regional focal point for human rights NGOs engaged in women's rights and gender equality. The EMHRN should become a major regional source of expertise and awareness raising about situations and dynamics that adversely affects women's rights and gender equality across the region and about regional interrelations in this regard. It should be a source of policy proposals on women's rights, gender equality and gender mainstreaming and of support to women's rights activists and their actions at regional and national level.

3.2.4 The fight against discrimination

A core element of human rights norms and values, i.e. of a genuine human rights culture, is the principle of non-discrimination on grounds such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or other option, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

In the EuroMed region, there are common debates relating to discrimination/ anti-discrimination issues which have evolved around the question of freedom of conscience and the freedom to practice or not to practice one's religion, which relate to the question of discrimination of religions,; related hereto, although belonging to different legal chapters, are the questions related to the defamation of religions and the protection of minorities against discriminatory practices - while issues pertaining to sexual rights are also becoming matters of increased discussion.

The general persistence of xenophobic trends in the region is another matter of concern that is linked to the question of discriminatory practices. These are again closely related to the existence of misperceptions and stereotypes of Islam and Arabs that shape identities in Europe while stereotyping and misperceptions of the 'West' have a similar function in the South and East Mediterranean.

The EMHRN will in the future aim at playing a role in the debates pertaining to these matters. It will

- In general, monitor the discriminatory practices in the region
- Monitor the situation of freedom of conscience, stimulate regional debate on this right and support campaigns in this regard

- Raise awareness about and stimulate debate concerning common regional trends regarding xenophobia, stereotyping and enemy pictures
- Engage in dialogue with governments, regional and intergovernmental institutions on questions relating to the fight against xenophobia and attacks on minorities
- Support activities at national level aimed at raising awareness about discriminatory practices and combating xenophobia
- Support human rights activists that are victims of discriminatory measures and practices
- In general liaise with other actors in this field (social movements, parliamentarians, agencies and foundations, trade unions, political parties)
- Consider systematically in all activities whether there are specific gender issues to look into and integrate a gender perspective accordingly

The overall objective over the next 6 years is that the EMHRN increases its status as a main site for human rights NGOs engaged in the fight against discrimination and xenophobia and a major regional source of expertise, awareness raising and policy proposals and action on cross regional issues related freedom of conscience, defamation, xenophobia, stereotyping and discriminatory practices. An important achievement would be to establish how these issues are interrelated in the region.

3.2.5 Migrants', Asylum Seekers and Refugees' rights

It is often forgotten, particular in European debates, that the MENA region is the largest per capita receiver of refugees in the world; and only in recent years has it been acknowledged that the South and East Mediterranean region not only is migrant 'producing' but also 'migrant hosting'.

It is not fully correct to put Europe and the South and East Mediterranean in the same basket when it comes to rights regimes for migrants and refugees, as these are currently largely discriminatory or non-existing in the South. Also, there are still only few NGOs in the South with capacity to work systematically in this field.

However, protection regimes in Europe are under attack as exemplified by the collapse of the Greek asylum system, push backs by Italy of migrants and potential refugees at open sea, the European return directive, etc. Central to these developments has been the increased criminalisation of those migrating or seeking asylum and even those assisting migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in need.

The development in the past years' migratory trends coupled with European externalisation of migrant and refugee management – as symbolised by the reinforcement of the Frontex Agency – makes the question of protecting undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees a common human rights concern for the region.

The fact that millions of migrants residing in Europe originates from the South and East Mediterranean, that they are main sources of foreign currency income for their countries of origin, and that their 'integration' or mere existence has become a focal issue in European policy and identity making also intimately links the region together.

Hence it makes sense to work regionally on the question both of the externalisation of European migration management policies and (the lack of) protection regimes in the South.. This includes the question of readmission agreements, interception and *refoulement* at open sea or at European and South Mediterranean borders.

It also makes sense to support work aimed at protecting and promoting the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of migrants and refugees, including their freedom of movement.

The EMHRN will build on its past achievements in this field and develop regional work on migration and refugee issues in order to:

- Strengthen networking among NGOs in the EuroMed region dealing with migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' rights
- Supporting the development of NGOs working in this field where these are absent.
- Monitor EU relations with its South and East Mediterranean partners, in particular readmission agreements; border control cooperation and Frontex work including conducting fact finding mission where accurate information is lacking
- Advocate for changed legislation and practice around migrant, asylum seeker and refugee protection in the South and East Mediterranean region where relevant; support and stimulate local NGO work in this regard through training
- Engage in dialogue with governments and EU institutions on questions relating to human rights, migration, refugee and asylum issues
- Conduct protection activities where migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are at immediate risk
- In general liaise with other actors in the field (social movements, parliamentarians, agencies and foundations, trade unions, political parties)
- Consider systematically in all activities whether there are specific gender issues to look into and integrate a gender perspective accordingly.

The overall objective over the next 6 years will be that the EMHRN, building on its past work becomes a main focal point for human rights NGOs engaged in migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' rights related to European interaction with the South and East Mediterranean countries. It should become a major regional source of expertise, awareness raising and policy proposals on migrant, asylum seeker and refugee protection capable of influencing cross regional debates on issues concerning both Europe and the South and East Mediterranean areas. The objective is also to assist emerging civil society organisations in the South and East Mediterranean capable of acting on migrant and refugee protection and of influencing national debates.

3.2.6 Economic and social rights

Economic figures show huge discrepancies between Europe and the South and East Mediterranean (except for Israel and Turkey). These were not diminished by the Barcelona process and they risk growing with the opening of the South and East Mediterranean markets for free trade. At the same time different forms of social discontent in the South and Europe became marked over the past years and were among the key issues leading to the revolutions, upheavals and demonstrations in the region.

The economies of Europe and the South/East Mediterranean countries are intrinsically interlinked and in both Europe and the South and East Mediterranean there are civil society organisations and social movements working on economic and social questions. However concerted work on economic and social rights did not yet materialise. In general, trade unions had little contact with NGOs and face problems in several South and East Mediterranean countries. Human rights organisations in the South have historically been established in a context of fighting for political and civil rights rather than economic and social rights, while NGOs in the North dealing with South and East Mediterranean economic and social issues had a development approach and only recently integrated rights perspectives into their work. Furthermore, important European actors in the field of development are donor organisations that, despite efforts to establish equal partnerships, de facto maintain asymmetrical relations with these.

For several years the EMHRN has had economic and social rights on its work program but did not succeed to move beyond ad hoc actions in this field. Because of the importance of the issue, which is also related to corruption matters, including its impact on the political situation the EMHRN should now consider this field as a matter of priority.

The EMHRN will

- Promote the research and mapping of economic and social relations between the EU, EU member states and its Mediterranean partners, including private actors, and stir debate about the impact of these on people's economic and social rights – including on migratory trends
- Stimulate local human rights work on the relation between governments' and private actors' economic and social policies and citizens' enjoyment of their rights. Make resources available for human rights work in this regard
- Suggest advocacy strategies vis-à-vis the EU and national governments aiming at integrating economic and social rights promotion and protection in their policies
- In general liaise with other actors in the field (social movements, parliamentarians, agencies and foundations, trade unions, political parties)
- Consider systematically in all activities whether there are specific gender issues to look into and integrate a gender perspective accordingly.

The overall objective is within the next 6 years to initiate and develop a regional site for human rights NGOs engaged in the question of the impact of regional economic and social relations on economic and social rights on the ground. In this regard the EMHRN should become a major regional source of expertise, awareness raising and policy proposals as well as of support to human rights activists and social movements working on these relations.

3.3. Country Approaches

As mentioned above, the EMHRN will in the future continue its regional work while at the same time respond to new challenges by increased and systematic engagement in work at country level as well as work on bi-lateral relations between the EU and each Mediterranean Partner.

The primary purpose will be to provide support to its members in the East and South Mediterranean without duplicating their work – building inter alia on its past experience with work on Israel, Palestine, Algeria, Syria and Tunisia. At the same time, the EMHRN will remain ready to engage in systematic support to its members in Europe if/ where the human rights situation worsens significantly.

The EMHRN will support members living in countries where civil society is kept under tight control by authoritarian rulers and security services, those enduring conflict situations or living under occupation, those living in countries where civil society has spaces for manoeuvre but where red lines for enjoying public freedoms are strictly monitored as well as those living in countries in which broader popular processes of transition towards democracy is under way. It will support women's rights organisations in their fight to promote gender equality and women's rights in political transitions where patriarchal regimes prevail, the social and political environment is hostile to women's rights, and gender based discrimination and violence persist.

Concretely, the EMHRN will prioritise and specifically focus actions, monitoring and coordination on its core competences in networking and on its six fields of regional specialisation.

3.3.1 In relation to countries where human rights defenders, men and women, are at great risk, the EMHRN will

- Monitor the situation in the individual countries in close cooperation with its members

- Establish ad hoc solidarity work with human rights defenders, in coordination with its local members, in order to diminish their isolation and facilitate their reaching out to civil society groups/ professional groups/ other international human rights NGOs in Europe
- Support members' national advocacy efforts upon their request
- Conduct capacity building activities, send missions when trials against human rights defenders take place and missions of solidarity or inquiry when relevant
- Mobilise civil society groups in Europe for their support
- Facilitate meetings with the EU institutions, EU member states and the UN mechanisms
- Promote gender mainstreaming as an integral part of human rights and democracy work

The EMHRN will act with the objective during the next 6 years to provide its members, human rights defenders and human rights organisations in these countries with maximum protection and assist them in developing spaces where they can use their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly and movement and promote democratic principles. The EMHRN will support human rights activists in setting human rights and democratic principles at the core of the social movements' work.

3.3.2 In relation to countries that are engaged in broader participatory transition processes towards democracy or other fundamental legal and institutional reform processes, the EMHRN will

- In close cooperation with its members monitor the situation in the individual countries and eventually step in on issues where local work needs amplification
- Support members' national advocacy efforts upon their request
- Offer knowledge and expertise from its thematic work (by means of missions, seminars, etc.)
- Offer interface functions, when relevant and in coordination with its members, between local and regional civil society, including with activists in countries going through similar changes
- Offer access to EU institutions, EU member states and UN instruments when there is need for amplifying local advocacy or add an international dimension to local work.

The overall objective over the next 6 years will be to contribute to strengthen and amplify the work of human rights defenders and human rights organisations on activities related to human rights monitoring, policy proposals and recommendations for reform in their countries. The EMHRN will contribute to bringing human rights activists at the forefront of national reform debates on governance and reform aimed at rooting it in human rights and democracy principles, including gender equality and non-discrimination.

3.3.3 As mentioned above in part 3.2.2 a third part of the EMHRN's work will consist in further developing its activities on *conflict situations and the respect for international and international humanitarian law (IHL)*.

PART 4: Work Methodology and Membership Support

As mentioned above the mission of the EMHRN is to promote and strengthen human rights and democratic reform within its regional mandate through civil society networking and cooperation. The Network seeks to develop and strengthen partnerships between NGOs in the EuroMed region, disseminate human rights values and increase capacities in this regard.

In this endeavour, the Network has chosen to use a number of interrelated work methods, i.e. Working Groups; Capacity Building; Advocacy; Communication; and Partnerships. The following pages provide an outline of these.

4.1 Working Groups

Networking is and will remain at the core of the EMHRN's work and identity aimed at strengthening the capacity of members to act and interact within the context of the region. The EMHRN's ability to bring human rights defenders together from all strands of the EuroMed region, the Maghreb, the Mashrek, and Europe is one of its key strengths and added value

Networking is conducive to the transfer of knowledge and experience from one member to the other, to the development of common stands, new partnerships and initiatives.

One way to develop networking is to bring human rights defenders from the whole region together in working groups, a way of working in which the EMHRN has a solid track record. Past experience shows that working groups, at their best, enhance intercultural understanding and cooperation between the North, East and South of the Mediterranean Sea; develop the capacity to work with human rights through the sharing of experiences; provide new contacts and partners; improve participants' capacity to manoeuvre in a regional context, including in relation to inter-governmental bodies; and enhance participants' sense of ownership of the EMHRN.

Drawing on its experience with the working group concept the EMHRN will develop different forms of interaction between its members

Regional Working Groups will be at the core of EMHRN's regional thematic work. The main purpose here is to address issues of regional concern with members and partners from a broader number of countries. The EMHRN aim at establishing/ developing a number of regional working groups under the themes addressed above.

At a country level the working group method will be adapted to the specific context of each country. In relation to countries where human rights defenders are at high risk, and/ where conflict and war persists, the EMHRN will pursue its work with ad hoc *Solidarity Groups* composed of a core of local members and partners to which are added EMHRN members and partners outside the country of concern.

In situations where human rights defenders have broader spaces for their work both at national and international level, the exact form of EMHRN's interventions will be agreed upon with local members and partners. One option may be that the EMHRN offer *Interfaces*, i.e. meetings and workshops where local human rights defenders, members and partners, can meet and exchange with EMHRN members and partners abroad.

Regional working groups, solidarity groups and interfaces will be important sites for the development of EMHRN policies and initiatives. They may also be sites for developing regional campaigns, suggesting capacity building initiatives et al. The EMHRN will aim at providing these groups with resources enabling them to carry out solidarity missions, trial monitoring mission, research and reporting, advocacy activities and receive specialised trainings.

One part of the groups' dealings will be to systematically look into whether there are specific gender issues to consider and integrate a gender perspective accordingly before conceptualizing and launching any action. It will actively seek to ensure gender parity in its missions and meetings. The EMHRN will also seek to ensure representation of young human rights activists in its activities

Since a main task of the working groups will be to deliver policies and advocacy as well as providing a context for mutual support, participants will be selected according to whether they have the necessary knowledge and experience to bring capacity and added value to the group. They will also be selected according to how well the activities of the working group match the priorities of the member

organisation. If needed, the EMHRN will attract non-member organisations to the working groups in order to ensure that the participants of the WGs, and the EMHRN in general, benefit from a strong composition of these.

4.2 EMHRN capacity building activities

Working groups are capacity building sites per se, and the activities suggested above will provide the EMHRN and its members with a number of assets to influence policies, raise awareness about the human rights and democracy problems in the region, promote networking and civil society cooperation, build civil society capacity, and protect members at risk. However they do not fully cover the needs for capacity expressed by members.

The strategy questionnaire forwarded to EMHRN members in 2010 revealed that they had a need for trainings on a range of issues while indicating that the EMHRN was particularly fit to deal with a) Lobbying and advocacy in relation to EU institutions, b) Knowledge about international human rights conventions and treaty bodies; c) gender mainstreaming; d) migration and refugee legislation and policies; e) human rights education; f) knowledge about the EuroMed region.

As a consequence, the EMHRN will develop capacity building activities - for example offering training courses or training modules/ expertise to its members - on the above mentioned issues⁴. These may take place at national or regional level and will in particular target organisations needing more knowledge or a general upgrade on specific topics. The courses will build on the expertise of member organisations, on EMHRN staff expertise and on resource persons. The trainings will not only be occasions for interactive learning but also for networking. New issues may arise from the EMHRN's work on national and regional level in the course of time (for example from the work on economic and social rights, and the work on legislative and judicial reform), and special courses may target young human rights activists.

4.3 Advocacy

The EMHRN will through its regional and country work support members in their advocacy efforts at national and regional level.

Being a network of organisations in the EuroMed region an overall objective of the EMHRN's advocacy work is to ensure that EMHRN and member policies and recommendations are fed into policies and practices of the EU institutions, EU member states and South and East Mediterranean partners.

The EU has in many ways disappointed human rights activists because of its weak foreign policy and lack of pro-active initiatives on human rights. Nevertheless, the EU and its member states remain one of the world's most important foreign policy players, being committed to human rights in its treaties, and hence offering potential allies among its actors.

The EMHRN has become known and respected for its work on the EU institutions and the added value this brings to human rights work. This observation is confirmed by members' response to the strategy questionnaire.

Hence, the EMHRN will continue to follow-up on the human rights dimensions of EU cooperation frameworks and policies, in particular the European Neighbourhood Policy, and it will strengthen its work on bi-lateral relations between the EU and its South Mediterranean Neighbours.

However, experience has shown that the EU after the Lisbon Treaty remains a weak and often divided foreign policy player, with a heavy bureaucracy, making it difficult to react efficiently in relation to third

⁴ The EMHRN may provide capacity building of its members in other areas according to needs identified.

countries. Several EU member states' bi-lateral relations with the South and East Mediterranean are in many aspects as important as the EU institutions when it comes to issues such as regime support, migration, trade, development aid, all bearing on citizens' every-day life . The EMHRN will therefore increasingly prioritise advocacy vis-à-vis EU member states instead of Brussels lobbying, and in this respect stimulate and support members' advocacy in this regard.

Due to the changes in the region, and with intensified country work of the EMHRN, advocacy and dialogue with South governments will also take up an increasing part of EMHRN lobbying.

Finally, in order to strengthen its advocacy work, the EMHRN will consider new avenues for lobbying. It will develop activities within the UN human rights system. It will keep systematic track of the UN calendar in order to identify relevant opportunities for 1) strengthening the EMHRN's work at national level and 2) influencing EU and EU member state relations with their Mediterranean partners. In sum, the relevance of doing Geneva advocacy will be judged on the backdrop of whether it reinforces EMHRN advocacy on Euro-Mediterranean human rights issues.

4.4 Communication

The general objective of EMHRN external communication work is to efficiently voice and communicate information about the activities and concerns of the EMHRN and its members to relevant media, decision makers and civil society groups.

It has for a long time been a wish of the members that the EMHRN reinforced its external communication profile. EMHRN advocacy activities benefit from parallel work with the European and Arab press, and the EMHRN's activities should be better known by the general public. In this regard it is crucial to build communication aspects into all the activities of the EMHRN, including those targeting decision makers.

In order to ensure this integration, the EMHRN will upgrade the number of communication staff and integrate external communication aspects of its work in all phases of activity planning and hence seek to ensure maximum visibility of the EMHRN and its members

The EMHRN will maintain and develop its web site including social media and audio-visual tools; it will maintain a regular information service, and continue publicising the activities, reports, press releases and statements of its members. It will strengthen communication with civil society organisations about EMHRN activities by forwarding regular news briefs to members and other interested audiences about EMHRN activities. It will provide support to campaigns if these are decided by members.

Finally, the EMHRN will strengthen its internal communication work in order to ensure that EMHRN members are kept up to date with each other's and the EMHRN's secretariat and executive committee activities. This will be done by including also internal communication aspects in all phases of activity planning as well as by disseminating internal newsletters covering EMHRN and members' activities,

In order to ensure the most relevant and updated communication profile a separate Communication Strategy document will be developed for the network in 2012-2013.

4.5 Members and Partnerships

The EMHRN's general objective of developing partnerships is to contribute to support efficient networks, platforms or alliances of civil society groups rooted in human rights values that can impact positively on the situation in the EuroMed region.

As indicated above, the EMHRN will systematically engage with partners at all levels of its activities and increasingly include non-members in the work of its working groups (solidarity groups, interfaces and regional working groups) where the added value, they can bring, is needed

The EMHRN will continue to seek broad alliance with - and outreach to – international non-governmental organisations, environmental and development groups inside and outside the region, social forums, political and religious groups where relevant.

In addition it will continue formal and informal consultations with its associate members, the international human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, FIDH and the OMCT. It will also pursue its close cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Support of Human Rights Defenders.

On the occasion of its meeting/ activities in the region it will continue its outreach to other civil society groups, political parties, etc.

The EMHRN will proactively seek to recruit new members in particular organisations dealing with EMHRN priority themes: it will also give particular attention to the need of attracting members in countries where the Network is weakly represented or has no members. Finally, it will seek to engage with initiatives stemming from young human rights activists.

The EMHRN will continue the process of adopting women's rights organisations as regular members aiming at having at least one member organisation per country with women's rights and gender equality as a priority issue.

4.6 Administration

The EMHRN will ensure that the organisational structure of the Secretariat is suited to implement the strategy in the most transparent, effective and efficient way. It will allocate the necessary resources enabling it to restructure the secretariat when needed, and where it is relevant.

It will base its activities on an efficient and professional secretariat with staff that is sensitive to intercultural dialogue, to gender mainstreaming and to the environment in which its members work. The staff will implement EMHRN programmes on the basis of rolling work plans, specific assignments for each staff member, and wage and staff regulations that comply with relevant international labour conventions and treaties. Furthermore, work conditions will be regulated according to relevant labour legislation in the country of residence of the employee and relevant agreements between employer and trade unions.

4.7 Evaluation

The EMHRN believes that it is important to evaluate its activities in order to learn from experience. In this sense, it will continue mainstreaming the use of short and mid-term objectives, defined results and indicators of achievement into its work and evaluate its main activities. The 2015 general assembly will be an occasion for mid-term evaluation of the strategy.

4.8 Fund raising

The EMHRN is in a constant process of identifying and diversifying funding sources in order to sustain the above activities.

Fund raising activities will be based on the following principles and aims:

- EMHRN accepts funds from public and private donors when they sustain activities that fall within the EMHRN's remit, strategy plan and work programme, and only insofar as the EMHRN's right to freely express its opinions and policies is respected, and no political conditions are set by the donors.

- The EMHRN aims at being in a financial position where one donor does not fund more than one third of EMHRN total activities;
- The EMHRN aims at developing reserve funds, when accepted by the donors, that can be used during transition periods when funding is scarce.

ANNEX A: The history of the Network and its structures

a. 1 A Brief History of the Network

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) was established as a civil society response to the Barcelona Declaration, the process it set up and the agenda it put in place, initiating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership involving the (then 15) European Union states, the EU Commission and 12 South Mediterranean partners (now the Union for the Mediterranean involving 43 members)

The founding meeting took place at the Danish Centre for Human Rights¹ in Copenhagen in January 1997 with the participation of a group of human rights activists from the North and the South of the Mediterranean active in the field of human rights prior to the Barcelona Declaration. They viewed the framework established by that Agreement as a useful context within which to work, i.e. a context in which they could come together, promote and protect international human rights principles and strengthen and develop further the values of cooperation and dialogue across cultural, social and economic borders.

It was felt that creating a Network would significantly enhance human rights work in the Barcelona Process and bring NGOs together in mutually beneficial relations across the region.

The first elective General Assembly was held in Copenhagen² in December 1997 with representatives of 49 organisations from the Euro-Med region. It elected an Executive Committee, adopted statutes and an action plan that gave priority to freedom of expression, assembly and association and the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

In 1999 the Network co-organised the EuroMed Civil Forum Conference on Human Rights and Civil Society in Stuttgart in the context of a Ministerial Summit of the Partnership. This meeting was a break-through for the EMHRN as it provided the opportunity for the EMHRN to establish itself in the EuroMed human rights community and a front promoter of a human rights agenda in the context of the Barcelona Process.

In early 2000, the EMHRN received an important EU funding contract and at its fourth General Assembly, in Marseille, a new action plan was adopted giving priority to the opening of an office in Brussels, development of regional human rights mechanisms, and the strengthening of the EuroMed Civil Forum.

In addition priority was given to regional, thematic work on: freedom of expression, assembly and association, and human rights defenders; women's rights; justice; refugees and the right to self-determination; the rights of migrants and asylum seekers; human rights education; as well as economic and social rights.

At its 7th General Assembly in Madrid, 12-14 May 2006, EMHRN members adopted the first genuine strategy plan that was updated at the 8th General Assembly in Barcelona, 12-14 December 2008. The current Strategy takes its onset in the past strategy and an evaluation thereof.

Today, the Network has succeeded in creating broad credibility within civil society in the region and with representatives of governments and intergovernmental bodies. It has established a strong profile in relation to the EU institutions while influencing human rights policies on a regional level³.

¹ Today the name is the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Initiators/Founders were Morten Kjaerum and Said Essoulami. Participants were from the Arab Human Rights Institute; Danish Centre for Human Rights; Dutch Refugee Council; Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights; European Council on Refugees and Exiles; Euro-Mediterranean Institute for Migration and Asylum; French Human Rights League; Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity; Al Haq; Italian Helsinki Committee; Human Rights Centre Essex; Moroccan Human Rights Organisation; Aabo Akademi; Ms Saeda Kilani, Mr Saad Djebbar.

² With the financial support of DANIDA.

³ This has been noted in evaluations of the EMHRN. See inter alia three evaluation report of the EMHRN on www.euromedrights.net: EU Evaluation of the EMHRN, 2003, EuropeAid/ ME8/B77050/IB/1999/0283B; DANIDA Evaluation of the EMHRN, 2004 - DANIDA, March 2005; DANIDA/SIDA/ AidCO Evaluation of the the EMHRN, January 2009

a. 2 Members of the EMHRN

The EMHRN has grown considerably since it was established. It now has 88 members based in 30 countries⁴ consisting of a diversity of human rights organisations, women's rights groups, migrant organisations, refugee councils, human rights institutions, research centres, and individuals. This diversity of involvement and perspective is one of the key added value dimensions of the Network.

Currently, the membership is divided into two categories⁵:

1. **Regular members** - they work on a local or a regional level in an EMP country – about 3/4 of the membership are regular members;
2. **Associate members** - they are based in non-EMP countries or are international organisations or organisations whose mandate does not fully comply with the objectives of the EMHRN. Associate members take part in the General Assembly but have no voting rights – about 1/7 of the members are associate members;

Members are admitted through a formal application procedure. The Executive Committee consults with members before making a recommendation to the General Assembly and the General Assembly ratifies new memberships.

In order to qualify for membership, organisations should be active in human rights issues relevant to the region. They should also be non-partisan and independent of government authorities.

The EMHRN attaches importance and value to geographical 'balance' within the Network.

a. 3 Structure and Bodies of the EMHRN

The EMHRN bodies aim at promoting democratic decision-making, transparency, participation and partnership within the Network.

- **The General Assembly** meets every three years – it approves and adopts statutes, overall policies, multi-annual work programmes, budgets and financial reports.
- **The Executive Committee** is elected by the General Assembly and is composed of up to twelve members⁶. Half are citizens of South and East Mediterranean countries and half are citizens of EU member states. The Executive Committee implements the decisions of the General Assembly and conducts Network business between Assembly meetings. It also oversees the work of the Secretariat.
- **Workings groups** - in addition to the executive bodies, the Network has developed thematic working groups where members regularly meet to advise the EMHRN, exchange experiences, develop joint policies, conduct joint projects and develop capacities.
- **The head quarter of the Secretariat** is based in Copenhagen while most of the staff today is located in offices in Amman, Brussels and Paris, focal points in Cairo and Rabat and a

⁴ Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Spain, Syria, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

⁵ The EMHRN also designates Honorary Members. These are persons who were Individual Members of the EMHRN until the 2008 general assembly. Only former executive committee members are now designated as honorary members. Honorary Members may attend the general assembly and take part in EMHRN activities. They pay a membership fee. They have no voting rights.

⁶ Members of the EC elected at the General Assembly in Barcelona 2008 were: Kamel Jendoubi (Committee for the Respect of Freedoms and Human Rights in Tunisia, Tunisia), Wadih-Ange Al-Asmar (Solida, Lebanon), Maysa Zorob (Al-Haq, Palestine), Magali Thill (Acsur, Spain), Moataz Al-Fegiery (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt), Lone Lindholt (Danish Institute for Human Rights, Denmark), Marie Lavrentiadou ([Greek Committee for International Democratic Society](#)), Michel Tubiana (Human Rights League, France), Daniel Saoud (CDF Syria), [Mustafa Emrah Şeyhanlioğlu](#), (IHD Turkey)

mission in Tunisia. The secretariat implements decisions of the Executive Committee and facilitates the development of the Network. It also ensures internal communication.

The Network has initiated and hosts the **Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders**. Its aim is to respond to human rights organisations' needs and to support human rights defenders and organisations by means of small scale and flexible funds. The General Assembly of the EMHRN is the representative council of the EMHRF⁷.

a. 4 Working languages of the EMHRN

The Working Languages of the EMHRN are Arabic, English and French.

a. 5 Funding and auditing

The EMHRN receives funds from a broad range of governmental, intergovernmental and private donors. EMHRN accounts are audited once a year by an independent auditor approved by the General Assembly.

⁷ The EMHRN also initiated (and hosted between 2002 and 2005) the Euro-Med Platform of Non-Governmental Organisations, a broad civil society coalition of organisations dealing with the Barcelona Process (human rights, trade unions, culture, environment, migration, etc.) and the Network of Danish NGOs related to the Arab Initiative (2005-2007).

ANNEX B: Statutory Objectives of the EMHRN

Article 2

2.1 Within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as defined by the Barcelona Declaration, adopted on the 10th November 1995, as well as in subsequent documents, and within the framework of co-operation between the European Union and the relevant Mediterranean countries, the objectives of the EMHRN are be as follows:

2.2

- To support and promote within the relevant States the universal principles of Human Rights as established by all the international instruments.
- To work in support for the development of democratic institutions and the promotion of the Rule of law, in particular freedom of association, equality between men and women, sustainable development and respect for economic and social rights. The EMHRN fights against inhuman and degrading treatments and torture, racism and anti-Semitism, as well as all discrimination based on origin, gender, family situation, pregnancy, physical appearance, family name, state of health, disability, genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, age, political opinions, trade union activities, belonging or non-belonging, be it real or assumed, to a specific ethnic group, nation, race or religion. It fights against war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- To support existing non-governmental organisations, the creation of independent and autonomous non-governmental organisations; to strengthen the capacity of civil society and to support, assist and co-ordinate the efforts of its members.
- To support and protect human rights defenders whose rights are violated.
- To promote human rights education and to act in favour of peace and the right of peoples to manage their own destinies.
- To promote dialogue and solidarity between peoples and cultures.

2.3 In order to achieve its objectives, the EMHRN:

- Intervenes with the relevant States and with European institutions to ensure respect for the aforementioned principles.
- Intervenes with the relevant States and with European institutions to ensure the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership implements the aforementioned principles in concrete terms.
- Gathers and disseminates among the relevant States, European institutions and the public opinion, information related to human rights situation and the Rule of law.
- Issues any recommendations it deems necessary to achieve progress in the implementation of the aforementioned principles.
- Can take legal action if this is deemed to be necessary.
- Launches relevant research and documentation activities and organise the publication, in any useful ways, of its work, positions and recommendations.
- Cooperates with all public or private, international or regional institutions whose activities are related to the objectives of the EMHRN.

ANNEX C: Policy Paper on Gender Equality

EMHRN Policy Paper on Gender Equality

1. The Political Context

1.1. International human rights treaties, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol¹, affirm the universal, indivisible and inalienable nature of women's rights. These instruments condemn all forms of discrimination and inequality to which women are subjected and draw attention to the urgent need to work towards the elimination of all gender-based discrimination of which women are victims.

1.2. Despite the progress accomplished by international bodies in defending and promoting women's fundamental rights, these rights are still not respected all over the world. Within the Euro-Mediterranean region, the environment – social, political, legal, administrative, economic and cultural – is characterised by deeply entrenched inequality between men and women. The superiority of fundamental rights over cultural and religious 'demands' is regularly challenged. This disparity takes on different forms and varies in intensity depending on the national context. However, it remains a reality in all the countries of the region. There is much discrimination against women in relation to their access to justice, and to defending and promoting their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

1.3 Gender violence is violence perpetrated by men against women because they are women. It is one of the worst kinds of discrimination that women in the region are victims of. Violence rates in the public space as well as within the family are high in the region. In Southern and Eastern countries, cases of gender-based violence, a phenomenon which leads to the death of hundreds of women each year, are increased by difficulties in accessing effective protection, socio-cultural legitimisation of these violations mainly under the argument of defending family honour, and structural impunity of the aggressors. In the countries of the region, including in Europe, gender violence requires the adoption and implementation of legislation and systems of prevention and protection. Special attention should be given to migrant women taking their particular vulnerability into consideration.

1.4. Violation of women's rights and the persistent inequalities as well as the work of women's rights organisations and those who fight for human rights, have made the governments of the Euro-Mediterranean region adopt a declaration in November 2006 to reinforce the participation of women in society; the Istanbul Plan of Action. In Marrakesh November 2009, the Ministerial conference to follow up on this Plan of Action stated that "important obstacles exist in the 43 countries of the Union for the Mediterranean which hinder women in enjoying their fundamental rights on equal footing with men". They were "convinced that the participation of women and men on an equal footing in all areas of economic, political and public life constitute an essential element of democracy and sustainable development (...) and that new concrete measures need to be put in place to reach this objective and integrate gender in all areas of action, taking the diversity of the region into consideration".

1.5. These 'claims' meet opposition from social, cultural and identity groups, a manifestation of the socio-cultural patriarchal structures that dominate the whole world.

¹ This international treaty, among others, was adopted by the U.N. to encourage states to eliminate de jure and de facto discrimination against women; see: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/.

2. Concepts and Definitions

2.1. The gender-based approach highlights that feminine and masculine roles do not refer to a biological fact but that they are social and cultural constructions. The socio-cultural construction approach also entails a hierarchy and domination of men over women. The gender-based approach sheds light on the patriarchal system which has monopolised the interpretation of social realities and history, and organised societies. The roles assigned to men and women have encouraged the emergence, maintenance and hardening of discrimination against women.

2.2. The gender-based approach makes it possible to implement strategies for establishing equalitarian societies, capable of guaranteeing fundamental rights for everyone. It permits reducing inequalities of rights and to correct the disequilibrium of power relations.

2.3. To reach its ultimate objective, equality, the gender-based approach supports the adoption of affirmative action, such as the parity policies, empowerment projects, etc.

2.4. Gender mainstreaming is defined by the UN as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

3. Why an EMHRN policy on gender equality?

3.1. The EMHRN’s mission is to promote and strengthen human rights and democratic reforms in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Women’s rights are an integral part of human rights. There is no democracy when half of the population cannot enjoy its rights.

3.2. The EMHRN has explicitly affirmed its commitment to fight against gender discrimination by including in its statutes the goal of working in support of ‘equality between men and women’² (Article 2.1).

3.3. The EMHRN has adopted provisions in its statutes and bylaws that are aimed at promoting parity between men and women in its structures and representations³.

3.4. The EMHRN has also adopted measures that contribute to gender mainstreaming in the development of its policies, planning and programmes, in particular through its Working Group on Gender and the participation of its political referent in the Quartet.

3.5. The EMHRN has amended its statutes in order to add gender-sensitive language in its core documents.

3.6. Gender equality, promotion of women’s rights and their participation in public life are the fundamental objectives of the EMHRN Strategy. Gender mainstreaming and women’s rights have also been recognised as decisive elements in the human rights and democracy programme.

3.7. Within this framework, the EMHRN has adopted gender parity⁴. It has decided to appoint a political referent to ensure the implementation of these commitments.

² ‘To work in support for the development of democratic institutions and the promotion of the Rule of law, in particular freedom of association, equality between men and women, sustainable development and respect for economic and social rights’ (Article 2.1).

³ The EMHRN’s statutes state that the Network ‘must strive’ to include an equal number of men and women in its decision-making bodies (General Assembly, Executive Committee) (Articles 4.1.2. and 4.2.1). The statutes also establish the principle of equality of opportunities in several articles dealing with EMHRN structures (Executive Committee, management group [Quartet], Secretariat, Working Groups). Moreover, the statutes include affirmative action mechanisms such as in Article 4.2.4. on the election of members of the Executive Committee. Additionally, the bylaws mention the application of the principle of gender parity to the admission of new members. The participation of the Executive Committee’s political referent for gender in the Quartet is also a step that ensures mainstreaming.

3.8. The EMHRN conducted a gender audit in 2008 recommending the adoption of a gender policy. The audit states that the principles and values of gender equality are present in the Network's statutes and bylaws. However, it highlights the absence of a core document defining its policy with respect to integrating gender parity and equality, and its strategies in this regard.

3.9. The aim of this policy paper is to make EMHRN's political commitment towards women's rights durable, to clarify its commitment to gender equality and to guarantee the application of gender mainstreaming in its principles, structures, activities and documents.

4. References of EMHRN Gender Equality Policy

4.1. The international instruments and conventions on women's rights, and first and foremost the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, are the fundamental references of the EMHRN.

4.2 The Istanbul Plan of Action 2006 and Marrakesh Conclusions 2009 and the recommendations of the EMHRN Shadow Report represent important regional instruments for advocacy on women's rights.

4.3 The gender dimension must be integrated into all activities, missions, publications and reports on the promotion and protection of human rights undertaken by the Network and its members. The EMHRN will ensure that its members and its technical team receive the training and resources needed to achieve that goal.

4.4. The EMHRN will have to encourage its member organisations to guarantee women and men equal access to protection of their human rights. To reach this goal, the EMHRN will define cases of gender-based discrimination and deliver recommendations to improve the protection of fundamental rights of both women and men.

4.5. Gender equality must be considered an integral part of all programmes, policies and activities of the EMHRN. To ensure gender equality, gender mainstreaming must be applied to all the structures and activities of the EMHRN⁵.

4.6. Contributing to gender equality implies acknowledging that policies, programmes and projects affect women and men differently. The EMHRN will have to take the steps necessary to analyse how its activities impact women and men in different ways (gender impact).

4.7. The empowerment of women is a basic condition for achieving gender equality. The EMHRN will favour it.

4.8 Programmes, policies and activities of the EMHRN must aim toward gender equality. In all cases, the EMHRN should not promote any actions which directly or indirectly lead to discrimination.

4.9. Promotion of equal participation of women as agents of change in the economic, social and political processes is essential for the realisation of equality. The EMHRN acknowledges that it is necessary to continue to work towards parity in its structures and its activities. It will have to monitor and evaluate the participation of women in its programmes, structures and activities and the degree of parity within the EMHRN.

⁴ Gender parity means there are equal numbers of men and women at all levels of a structure, as a government, parliament, party, organisation, network, etc. It must include significant participation of both genders, particularly at senior levels and decision-making positions. As an example, in order to achieve gender parity in politics, women have defended and pushed for the adoption of quotas.

⁵ Gender mainstreaming means that equality between women and men must be integrated at all levels of policy. From the planning to the implementation stage of a programme, gender-sensitive policy and gender equity must be mainstreamed. This notion is based on the reality that no policy is gender-neutral. Economics and politics must contribute to the elimination of inequalities and injustices between men and women. Gender mainstreaming seeks to establish equality of opportunities as the basis of the whole policy and the duty of all leaders. Thus equal opportunities will become a core mission (EMHRN definition)

4.10 Contributing to gender equality requires the adoption of specific measures. The EMHRN will adopt all *affirmative actions- measures* at its disposal to ensure equal participation of men and women in its structures, its programmes, its policies, in its decision-making process, and in its missions and activities.

4.11. The EMHRN should guarantee that its budgets are gender sensitive. The EMHRN will allocate the funds needed not only to conduct specific activities (developing plans, strategies, activities and publications related to the dissemination, monitoring and implementation of the treaties, the Istanbul Framework of Action and Marrakesh Conclusions and other activities of the Gender Working Group) but also to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into all the activities of the Network and all of its other Working Groups.

5. Objectives of the EMHRN Gender Equality Policy

The general objective of the EMHRN Gender Equality Policy is to promote gender equality in order to contribute to the transformation of the societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region. To do that, it is a prerequisite that the EMHRN is able to achieve gender equality in its structures and activities.

The specific goals pursued by the EMHRN's Gender Equality Policy are the following:

5.1. To highlight the question of gender equality in the global fight for human rights.

5.2. To promote the adoption of measures, actions and specific programmes aimed at the defence and promotion of women's rights and gender equality by the EMHRN and its members.

5.3. To make the EMHRN and its members aware of the importance of gender mainstreaming; train members of the technical team on the gender-based approach, and acquaint them with the tools and techniques needed. The EMHRN Gender Kit will be a fundamental tool in the pursuit of this goal.

5.4. To contribute to the distribution, awareness and adoption, by the EMHRN and its members, of the conventions, texts and tools used to promote the rights of women.

5.5. To ensure that the EMHRN's commitment to gender equality is clearly expressed in the Network's core documents and possible amendments (statutes, bylaws, strategy, work plans, staff collective agreement, etc.).

5.6. To ensure that women and men participate equally in the EMHRN's structures and activities, and that the Network's capacities and human resources be used to the fullest extent possible by involving women as much as men in its work, and resort to affirmative action if necessary.

5.7. To encourage that EMHRN member organisations adopt equal participation and affirmative actions- mechanisms.

5.8. To ensure that the gender dimension is incorporated into all of the EMHRN's activities, documents, publications and decisions, in terms of their impact and their recommendations, as well as in terms of gender-sensitive language.

5.9 To ensure that women and men equally take part in political decision-making processes within the EMHRN and its member organisations, and by extension throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region.

5.10. To encourage synergies and partnerships with feminist organisations, networks and campaigns, and with those fighting to protect women's rights, and encourage them to join the EMHRN and the EMHRN to join such networks.

5.11. To ensure that the values and principles affirmed in this policy paper in favour of equality between women and men are incorporated into the Network's new strategy, as well as in its planning, programmes and budgets, and that the goals outlined here are incorporated into them as well.

5.12 The Quartet and the Executive Committee are responsible for the adoption, distribution and implementation of the Gender Equality Policy.

5.13 The political referent for gender on the Executive Committee will be responsible for following up on the EMHRN gender policy.