



EMHRN Executive Committee meeting Istanbul, 15-17 February 2013

Minutes – approved

The EMHRN Executive Committee meeting took place in Istanbul on 15-17 February 2013. The meeting was preceded by a mission to Ankara on 11-13 February 2013 in order to visit and show solidarity to EC member Osman Isci, IHD, in prison and to meet with the National Human Rights Institute, the Turkish Ministry of Justice, the EU delegation, and the Human Rights Association. The EMHRN also used the opportunity of being in Istanbul to meet with its new member organization, i.e. Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, in order to exchange information on current and future activities. Finally, the EC invited the Human Rights Association (Istanbul branch) and the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly for a discussion of the current human rights and refugee situation in Turkey during their meeting.

PARTICIPANTS

Executive Committee (EC) of the EMHRN:

Michel Tubiana (President), Nassera Dutour (Vice president, on February 16-17), Alya Chérif Chamhari, Anitta Kynsilehto, Ayachi Hammami, Eugenia Papamakariou, Isaías Barreñada, and Mahmoud AbuRahma (EC members).

Secretariat:

Marc Schade-Poulsen (Executive Director), Marit Flø Jørgensen (Program Director) and Maibritt Nielsen (Executive Secretary, Rapporteur).

Other participants:

Rohan Jayasekera (Communication consultant, on 16 February), Fazıl Ahmet Tamer and Ayşe Günaysu, Istanbul branch of the Human Rights Association (on 15 February), and Oktay Durukan, Kerem Ciftcioglu and Yetvart Danzikyan, Helsinki Citizen's Assembly (on 15 February).

Absent with notification:

Moataz El Fegiery (Treasurer), Raffaella Bolini, Søs Nissen and Osman Isci (EC members) – see under point 15 *Miscellaneous*.

AGENDA

1. Welcome - Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the EC meeting on September 28-30 2012
2. Round on the recent political developments in the region
3. Report from the Secretariat
4. Financial report from the Secretariat, including fundraising
5. Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process
6. Meeting with the EMHRN members in Turkey on the current refugee and human rights situation in Turkey
7. Communication strategy for the EMHRN
8. Internal communication within the Executive Committee
9. EMHRN's cooperation with international organisations
10. Validation of the Work plans of the different Working groups
11. Gender program and gender mainstreaming
12. Membership issues



13. Discrimination: what future program for the EMHRN
14. Discussion on issues for press statement
15. Miscellaneous



1. Welcome - Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the EC meeting on September 28-30 2012

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Michel Tubiana welcomed the Executive Committee members to Istanbul. He reminded the EC that the meeting had been preceded by a mission to Ankara on 11-13 February 2013 to visit Osman Isci and to meet with the Turkish authorities. As regards Osman Isci, the accusation against him was not yet known but it was foreseen that his trial would take place in the following 8 months [after the meeting, the trial was scheduled for 10 April 2013]. Following the EC's mission to Ankara, a statement on the case of Osman Isci was issued in cooperation with the IHD.

Decision:

- The EC approved the agenda of the meeting
- The EC approved the minutes from the last Executive Committee meeting on 28-30 September 2012 without any comments

Documents:

- 1.1 Agenda (for approval)
- 1.2 Minutes from the EC meeting on September 28-30 2012 (for approval)
- 1.3 Minutes from the Quartet meeting on December 17 2012 (for information)

2. Round on the recent political developments in the region

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Isaías Barreñada made an introduction to the round on the recent political developments in the region, saying that the revolutions that took place at the end of 2010 and in early 2011 had changed the landscape in the region but at the same time, these developments had led to uncertainties, increasing instability and the emergence of new actors in for instance Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The uncertainties should be taken into consideration by civil society and the human rights defenders as they might undermine the ongoing reforms. The key element of any democratic reform, Isaías Barreñada said, is the inclusion of all actors to avoid falling back in totalitarian regimes.

Isaías Barreñada added that some countries had not experienced a revolution, i.e. Morocco and Jordan; however the governments in these countries had introduced reforms in order to prevent revolutions but the population remained oppressed. In Algeria, the situation remains frozen, and in Syria, the situation is very complex. As for Palestine, there is no progress; whereas Israel is losing the international support it always enjoyed and is having a very proactive discourse against Syria. In general, the economic situation and the life conditions have not improved in the South Mediterranean countries despite of the revolutions' demand for social justice.

When it comes to Europe, the European countries are more concerned with its internal issues, for instance unemployment, in particular in Spain and Greece, immigration, poverty, discrimination, exclusion and restriction of rights, Isaías Barreñada said. Surprisingly, this has not led to a decrease of the EU's programs and funding of



democracy and human rights, on the contrary as the budget has increased 5%, a special human rights representative has been appointed and new instruments to support human rights are put into place in 2013, for instance an independent foundation for democracy aiming at supporting democracy militants in the countries close to Europe (total budget 14 million Euros).

Following the introduction to the situation in the region, Marc Schade-Poulsen asked Isaías Barreñada what the relationship between the North and the South is today and if something unites them. Isaías Barreñada answered by saying that the countries in the North focus on their national problems now due to the decrease of the public funds, and this affects the bilateral activities.

The EC members then had a round on the recent developments in their respective countries highlighting;

- President Barack Obama's visit to the Middle East in March 2013
- The UN's upgrade of Palestine in November 2012, recognizing Palestine as a sovereign state
- The increased interaction between Palestine and Egypt, and the influence of the situation in Egypt on the Palestinian internal affairs
- The new Constitution in Tunisia that does not separate religion and law
- The worsening economic situation in Tunisia, the increase of prices, lack of investments, and the set back of the tourism that lead to social instability
- The killing of the opposition leader Chokri Belaid and the arrest of demonstrators in Tunisia
- The prosecution of demonstrators in Greece, and the increase of the prices of electricity and heating that not all inhabitants can afford anymore
- The worrying development in Finland where people tend to focus on the situation in their own country only, and the general lack of solidarity in European countries that face a financial crisis
- The negative reactions towards the multinational companies in Algeria, and the infiltration of the Statoil gas field in the desert, a region that is usually considered to be a high security area
- The Islamists in power following elections in the region and the strength of civil society that oppose the Islamists
- The worsening situation in Syria, facing an armed conflict with many groups and territories as well as many refugees, including more than half a million Palestinians
- The complex armed conflict in Mali that has also consequences for the EuroMed region, a conflict that France chose to interfere in
- The fear of Islam and Muslims expressed by a recent poll in France, and the need to look into the issue of discrimination
- The increase of fascist parties that influence the political debate negatively in countries such as Spain
- The role of the EU that could consider using conditionality when granting money to countries as Tunisia, and the challenge of the EU to consolidate between the external and national policies
- The change of the political power and the role of some of the actors in the region that the EMHRN could consider inviting for a meeting to know their viewpoints better

On a general note, Michel Tubiana said that as the EC members of the EMHRN, they should not limit themselves to analyse the situation of their respective countries only but the region as a whole in order to help the EMHRN in its work in the region.

3. Report from the Secretariat

Moderator: Alya Cherif Chammari

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the report from the Secretariat (see 3.1 *News Exchange summary no. 63-64* and 3.2 *News Exchange no. 65*). He informed that many Working Groups have started up their work, the Justice Working Group being an exception as the Project coordinator is in the process of being employed. The Strategy



is being implemented now, and the members will have an even stronger profile than before. Marc Schade-Poulsen then went through the activities of the different projects and invited the political referents to comment on them (*activities are only mentioned below when they are not already included in the 3.1 News Exchange summary no. 63-64 and 3.2 News Exchange no. 65*).

Palestine, Israel and Palestinians

Mahmoud Abu Rahma mentioned that four members had participated in the high level mission to the Netherlands on 27-30 January 2013, i.e. PCATI, Al-haq, Mezan Center for Human Rights, and Adalah.

Periodic result document

The EMHRN is planning the activities for the next six months and try to set political achievements for staff; however the planning cycle does not match the dates of the EC meetings. Marit Flø Jørgensen added that the Secretariat is trying to strengthen planning and evaluation. The EMHRN implements a lot of activities but the Network would also like to measure the impact of these and work on synergies between the projects. She said that she would like the EC to be involved in the process and she would therefore send the Periodic result document from March to October 2013 to the EC. The next version would cover the period October 2013 to February 2014 and would be distributed for the EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013.

Documents:

- 3.1 News Exchange summary (no 63-64) (*for information*)
- 3.2 News Exchange no. 65 (*for information*)
- 3.3 Work plan 2013 (*for information*)

4. Financial report from the Secretariat, including fundraising

Moderator: Alya Cherif Chammari

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the EMHRN's financial situation looks good in 2013. It is challenging for the EMHRN that the Network has to renew its funding contracts every second year but Marc Schade-Poulsen was confident that the donors will continue to fund the EMHRN, and that the Network will be able to maintain the current level of activities. DANIDA, being one of the EMHRN's main donors, will change its way of handling its funds for the Middle East and will thus select 10 organisations only that will receive funds. The EMHRN is too small to present itself as a single candidate and therefore the EMHRN will make a common proposal with the Foundation for 2013-2015. SIDA is another of the EMHRN's main donors, and the Network will negotiate its contract with them for 2014-2015.

Marc Schade-Poulsen then presented the document *4.1 Budget and results for 2012 activities*; he noted that the Secretariat is doing the final accounts for 2012 at the moment, and that 28 February 2013 was the deadline for any pending reimbursements from 2012. The budget presented reflects the Strategy, meaning that 40% is spent on thematic work, 20% on country work, and the remaining 40% on support and networking activities, communication, EC, GA, and administration.

This presentation was followed by a presentation of the document *4.2 Budget 2013*; Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that the numbers in red signified the funds that had not yet been secured equal to 2% of the total budget, however there would be savings on staff as there are delays in hiring new staff members, and it was estimated that the budget for 2013 would be fully covered.

Documents:

- 4.1 Budget and results for 2012 activities (*for approval*)
- 4.2 Budget 2013 (*for information*)
- 4.3 Fundraising update (*for information*)



5. Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process

Moderator: Anitta Kynsilehto

Marc Schade-Poulsen used three different organizational charts, i.e. the ideal structure, the decision/ meeting structure and the 2013 structure, to update the EC on the restructuring process.

As for the first organizational structure, Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that there have been changes to the presentation made of the restructuring at the EC meeting in Copenhagen on 28-30 September 2012; it had thus turned out to be impossible to create different teams of staff members with the current Strategy as each Working Group is specific and has its own dynamic. Instead, different ad hoc task forces would be set up for a certain issues. It has also turned out to be inappropriate for all themes to report directly to the Program director. Finally, a person dealing with the members and their capacity building had been placed in Copenhagen.

In relation to the decision/ meeting structure, Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the top management will take decisions about funding proposals, employment etc. The Program director, Advocacy director, and Communication Director will meet with the Executive Director to strategize and strengthen the daily coordination, whereas the Program director and the Executive director will cooperate on the thematic and country activities. The advocacy and communication perspectives will be included from the beginning of activities.

When presenting the third organizational structure 2013, Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that the current staff regulations cover all offices now, however, in the future, there will be specific staff regulations for each office. Also the wage structure will be revised, and new job descriptions are being edited. These changes are currently being negotiated with the staff members and should also be negotiated with the donors, which is time consuming. The management is also finalizing a staff development plan that specifies the training courses allocated for staff members in order for them to develop their capacities. Finally, the aim is also to strengthen the administrative department.

The EMHRN will in the near future employ the following positions: Justice Project coordinator, Communication director, Fundraiser [these three staff members were employed following the meeting], and an Advocacy officer on the Mashrek. Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that it is not necessarily easy to find the right people and integrate them into a new structure.

Documents:

5.1 Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process

6. Meeting with the EMHRN members in Turkey on the current refugee and human rights situation in Turkey

Moderator: Isaías Barreñada

Michel Tubiana welcomed the EMHRN's Turkish members in Istanbul, i.e. the Human Rights Association (Istanbul branch) and the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, to the EC meeting.

The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly informed in particular about the migration, asylum and refugee problems in Turkey, highlighting that there are currently 180.000 Syrian refugees in 15 camps across seven provinces and another 100.000 Syrians in the city center. In addition, there are approx. 35.000 individual asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, and Somalia. Turkey is also a transit country for asylum seekers on their way to the EU and a destination for economic migrants, the latter amounting to a total of approx. 45.000 in 2012 who are mainly employed in areas as household, sex industry, construction etc.



Turkey would like to become a member of the EU but for now the accession negotiations with Turkey have been put on hold. However, Turkey and the EU already cooperate on migration issues as irregular migration control according to the readmission agreement signed by Turkey.

The Human Rights Association added that Turkey only accepts refugees from European countries, mostly from Kosovo and Chechnya. These refugees do not have the right to work and stay in centers for refugees in small states of Turkey for up to two years - as opposed to European countries where the refugees get certain benefits.

It was mentioned that some legislative amendments are being implemented that will give the refugees more rights, for instance the right to appeal in court, and thus improve the refugees' conditions to a certain extent. With thousands of refugees in Turkey, there is however more than enough to do for the few organisations working on the refugee issue.

The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly said that according to the Geneva Convention from 1915, it is possible to obtain asylum if the asylum seeker comes from a member state. However, if the asylum seeker is from outside Europe, Turkey acknowledges his/her need for protection but is not bound by it. Instead Turkey will offer the asylum seeker temporary asylum until a long term solution in another country can be found. The asylum seeker will be asked to go to a certain city to register with the authorities.

Following the presentation of the refugee and migration situation in Turkey, Michel Tubiana asked how the Turkish society looks upon the asylum seekers. The Human Rights Association said that the Turks had got accustomed to see refugees and to employ foreign people from Georgia, Armenia etc. following the collapse of the Soviet Union that opened the doors to a lot of foreign workers. In Turkey, there is not the same experience of racism as in Greece towards the asylum seekers. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly however thought that Turkey would experience more racism in the future, being a country of migration, and he had already noted some tendencies to racism from his travels to Turkish satellite cities where refugees are living.

Isaías Barreñada asked for information on the minors among refugees, and the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly answered by saying that the UNCHR registered the arrival of 500 minor refugees in 2012. They are housed in child protection agencies where the service is relatively high; however it also happens that they are detained together with adults.

Alya Cherif Chamhari asked whether women face double discrimination, being both migrants and women. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly answered that women represent approx. 50% of the asylum seekers according to the UNCHR. They come from countries as for instance Iran and come with their children to seek asylum. It was their feeling that these women do encounter double discrimination. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly added that many migrant women encounter gender based violence in Turkey and that they are unable to seek protection from the authorities.

Isaías Barreñada asked what the position of the political parties and trade unions is in relation to refugees. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly said that the party in government is aware of the asylum and migration issues in Turkey; however the opposition parties do not have a position on the issues but rely on the input from civil society. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly added that the issue of migration and refugees had not been politicized as in many other European countries.

Alya Cherif Chamhari then asked what the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly's activities are in relation to the Syrian refugees. They explained that they had had the chance to visit the Syrian refugee camp as the first human rights organisation, and that they try to monitor the situation of the Syrian refugees from a distance.

Ayachi Hammami asked what the daily work of the two organisations is and what their needs are in relation to the EMHRN and other NGOs. Helsinki Citizen's Assembly said that its 20 staff members try to protect asylum seekers together with other NGOs; they lobby the government, act as the asylum seekers' watch dog, and



advocate on issues as the readmission agreement. As for the Human Rights Association, their 28 branches in Turkey work on the Kurdish issue, prison and migration problems, as well as violations of human rights.

Marc Schade-Poulsen asked if Turkey has signed any European readmission agreements, and the Helsinki Citizen's Assembly said that Turkey has a bilateral protocol with Greece but that its actual implication has been very symbolic. Turkey is currently seeking bilateral agreements with approx. 15-20 countries to prepare the EU membership.

Mahmoud Abu Rahma asked how the general human rights situation in Turkey could be characterized. The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly said that there are currently approx. 1000 activists in prison considered by the government to be terrorists. The mere participation in demonstrations is considered to be terrorism. The Human Rights Association added that Turkey has the biggest number of journalists in prison in the world and that a lot of Kurdish lawyers are in prison as well. This is the government's method of keeping the opposition quiet, they said.

7. Communication strategy for the EMHRN

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Marc Schade-Poulsen made a brief introduction to the story of the communication of the EMHRN, mentioning that it was not until 2006, that the EMHRN employed a communication officer based in Copenhagen (the position is now in Brussels). In 2008, a media officer in Cairo was also employed in order to reach the Arab press. Back then, the communication issues were not included in the planning process from the beginning; the EMHRN first produced things and then communicated about them.

In recent years, the EMHRN has met some difficulties in terms of internal cooperation and different technicalities, in particular in relation to the web site and the database, but the EMHRN has now received a grant from the Open Society Institute to upgrade its communication department, and a Communication director will be employed and be part of the management. The EMHRN has also contacted a communication consultant, i.e. Rohan Jayasekera, to assist with the external communication so the EMHRN can influence decisions makers effectively in order to change the situation in the region.

Communication consultant Rohan Jayasekera then presented the *7.1 Consultancy report*. He noted that it was his impression from talking with people within the EMHRN that there is some lack of clarity as to which audience the EMHRN wants to address and how. His report provides the EMHRN with some tools that will allow the Network to identify its audience and boost its profile outside the Network without taking away its authority and credibility. The report also presents some proposals for work routines that will mainstream externally and internally the planning, implementation and final reporting, as well as some steps to improve and integrate members' contributions. The ambition is that the name of EMHRN will be synonym with human rights. He noted that the News Exchange is a gold mine of information that could be used for speeches, Twitter and Facebook messages etc. The same story could easily be used in different ways for different audiences. He furthermore stressed the importance of the internal communication and referred to the report for suggestions to internal tools, including database integration, training programs etc.

Rohan Jayasekera then highlighted different issues for the EC to consider, i.e.

- The type of messages the EC wants to communicate. Once this would be clear, there are some straight forward tools that can be used for the communicating the message
- The Francophone nature of the EMHRN; the Francophone, Anglophone and Arab journalists approach stories and absorb news differently due to traditions and languages, and it is not clear if English, French and Arab will be equally important languages for the EMHRN which is important to know in order to define the way the Network will choose and address the media and recruit its communication staff



- The identity of the EMHRN; it should be addressed whether the EMHRN should be a campaign organization
- The EC should have confidence in staff that they communicate the message the EC wants in social media, public media, and the TV, and the staff should have training in order to do so.

Following Rohan Jayasekera's presentation of the report and the issues to be considered by the EC, Michel Tubiana said that there are many instruments in the report that are interesting. He noted that countries have different cultures, and that even organizations in the same country have different cultures. However, using three languages is not different from what other organisations do although it is more complicated. He thought that the EMHRN should be proactive and ensure that the Network has enough competences to be more autonomous and able to react quickly to the events in the region, which is not always the case today. He added that the internal communication is heavy and insufficient, and that the web site and database do not function well today.

Rohan Jayasekera agreed with Michel Tubiana on the importance of autonomy. It would be important for staff to be confident in the messages they bring and to have the confidence from the EC. As for the database, he said that its development is essential for the communication strategy; relevant key editors, journalists etc. should be identified and included in the database in order to build working relations with them and the members could assist with this. The database will ensure that the message gets to the targeted audience.

Marc Schade-Poulsen said that it is important to identify the message and the audience from the beginning and create a communication culture which the EMHRN has not had so far. Isaiás Barreñada thought that the EMHRN should bear in mind the added value of the EMHRN as a network and its cooperation with its members, identify the receivers that correspond to its messages, and avoid contributing to the mass communication. Alya Cherif Chammari mentioned that there are three tracks for any communication process, i.e. to 1) lobby decision makers; 2) disseminate information to be visible; and 3) react to the different events and developments.

Mahmoud Abu Rahma said that he was divided between being fast at replying to the developments in the region – and being slower at it but keeping the Network's authority that comes from the Network's cooperation with its members. He was not sure either how 2-3 communication staff members could follow all the work of the Working groups and speak on their behalf, and he thought that it would require a discussion at the level of the Working groups.

Rohan Jayasekera answered Mahmoud Aby Rahma by saying that it was not necessarily a question between either other. The EMHRN should consider how it brings its members into the process, and in his report he suggests tools to make this possible. The EMHRN could also consider focusing activities around a particular subject or country, and a good way to start cooperation with media is to focus on individual stories, he said. The cooperation with the media would however only be successful if the communication department does not lack support from the management.

Finally, Michel Tubiana asked whether social media as TWITTER and Facebook could be useful for the EMHRN. Rohan Jayasekera answered by saying that TWITTER is for communicating with journalists and that it is very useful for the media. The EMHRN could use it to make a short statement that can quickly be shared as it more accessible to the journalists. He advised the EMHRN to consider using TWITTER as well as Facebook as many people are using it as an alternative to the real press, in particular in the Arab world.

Documents:

7.1 Consultancy report (*for discussion*)



8. Internal communication within the Executive Committee

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Ayachi Hammami invited the EC to come up with suggestions for improving their internal communication, his own suggestion being to have Skype meetings every second Saturday (see *8.1 Note on communication means and methods available within the EC*).

In relation to the internal communication, Rohan Jayasekera said that successful communication requires a consultative process. In practical terms, a text of 60-70 words could be drafted by those who know the subject in question best and placed on line ready for amendments. Those who have a password can access the document and their amendments will be visible. The process would speed up the EMHRN's ability to comment on statements. In the next version of his report, Rohan Jayasekera would add a strategy for the use of this kind of communication tool. It would also be possible to create a forum where only the EC has access, and the EC members could then decide themselves what they want to be involved in.

Mahmoud Abu Rahma asked whether there was a risk that the system could be hacked, and Rohan Jayasekera answered by saying that there are no guarantees against it but that the EMHRN can make it difficult for hackers to access it by the use of encryption.

Michel Tubiana said that there are currently some frustrations within the EC because sometimes messages for the EC are in French, sometimes in English, and not all EC members understand both languages. Sometimes there are also parallel discussions with some EC members when all EC members ought to be informed of the issue in question. He therefore suggested that discussions should be translated into both English and French, and that the minutes from the Working group meetings should be sent to all EC members in order to open up communication.

Marit Flø Jørgensen noted that the political referents participate in the Working group meetings and that they are in contact with her to know the issues discussed in the Working group and can thus report back to the EC on the preoccupations of the Working groups. It was her concern that it would make it difficult for the Working groups to react timely if all EC members would engage in the debates of the Working groups, and in addition documents should be translated into more languages. Instead she invited the EC to contact the Project coordinators if they would like to receive the minutes from a specific meeting. It was however Rohan Jayasekera's experience that, in time, people would engage in less and less debates.

Nassera Dutour said that not all EC members are involved in the Working groups so she considered it to be important that all information is disseminated to all EC members in order for them to be updated on the work of the EMHRN. Alya Cherif Chammari was in favour of a system where the EC members can access and read the minutes if interested. She suggested discussing how the EC can communicate in between the meetings, and how the EC can prepare for their meetings in order to be more efficient. However, Anitta Kynsilehto said that it was her worry that the EC would forget to access the system to read the minutes.

As for Mahmoud Abu Rahma, he said that he would prefer to receive a one page report instead of detailed minutes from the Working group meetings. In relation to the PIP Working group, he noted that some information has to be kept confidential. Ayachi Hammami said that if the sensitive issues were left out of the minutes, it would not be a problem to distribute the minutes.

Michel Tubiana said that the EMHRN has a message to convey to the decision makers and to the EMHRN's members, and that there are some technical tools that can assist the EMHRN in this according to the report presented by Rohan Jayasekera. The top priority right now is to employ a Communication director who should set up meetings with the EC and staff members and prepare a communication plan to be presented to the EC. Finally, Michel Tubiana reminded the EC members that they have the obligation to read all documents before the EC meetings in order for their meetings to be fruitful.



Decision:

- The Communication director should prepare a plan for the external and internal communication after having meetings with the EC and staff members, and present this plan at the EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013

Documents:

- 8.1 Note on communication means and methods available within the EC (*for information*)

9. EMHRN's cooperation with international organisations

Moderator: Eugenia Papamakariou

The EC discussed various options for strengthening the cooperation with international organisations.

10. Validation of the Work plans of the different Working groups

Moderator: Ayachi Hammami

Marit Flø Jørgensen presented the *10.1 Overview of the Working group's work plans* to the EC for their approval. She said that, in the document, each Working group's strategic direction and activities of 2013 had been outlined. The Work programme 2012-15 adopted by the General Assembly in 2012 had been added to the document to see if it matches the activities of 2013. She noted that the Freedom of association and assembly; Women's rights and gender mainstreaming; Migration and asylum seekers; and Palestine, Israel and Palestinians Working groups had met so far. The Work plans for the Working group on Justice as well as the projects on discrimination and ecosoc had not been developed yet and would thus need a more general approval by the EC. It was foreseen to present the Work plan for the Justice Working group at the next EC meeting on 14-16 June 2013. She then invited the political referents to present the different projects and their activities (see *10.1 Overview of the Working group's work plans*).

During the presentation of the different projects, Anitta Kynsilehto mentioned the possible synergies between the projects on Migration and Freedom of Association, for instance in the case of the arrested sub-Saharan activists. Michel Tubiana thought that it should be considered to add Freedom of circulation to the Migration project as there are currently difficulties in obtaining visas which is related to the everyday life of people. Alya Cherif Chamhari agreed with Michel Tubiana that the issue of mobility between the North and the South is very important. Marc Schade-Poulsen said that the freedom of movement is a concern for all Working groups but he was not sure how to coordinate it.

Alya Cherif Chamhari added that women are discriminated twice as female migrants, being exploited sexually and used as domestic workers, and she thought that the EMHRN should shed the light on it. Anitta Kynsilehto answered by saying that one of the focus areas of the training of the Migration Working group organized in Oxford on 17-19 May 2013 is gender based persecution.

Marit Flø Jørgensen pointed out that trainings of civil society in Libya and Tunisia – attended by Algerians and Moroccans as well - had been organized on the rights of refugees, and that there is a need to bring people together to exchange experiences. Marc Schade-Poulsen added that one of the added values of the Migration Working group is that it brings people together from each side of borders.

Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that there are also possible synergies between the Migration Working group and the Working group on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians in relation to the Palestinian refugees in Syria. Mahmoud Abu Rahma agreed to the idea and added that the situation of the refugees in Syria is terrible and that



the Palestinian refugees do not find much sympathy at the Lebanese and Jordanian borders. Marit Flø Jørgensen was however in doubt whether the Migration Working group should work on the Palestinian case.

In relation to the Working group on Palestine, Israel and Palestinians, Michel Tubiana asked whether any new activities on the issue of the fight against impunity were foreseen, an issue that has been part of the Working group's activities for some time. Mahmoud Abu Rahma explained that the EU is always divided when voting for resolutions that could have promoted accountability. The Working group would like to have a clearer strategy for their work on accountability in order to have more effective advocacy at the EU level on the issue of accountability.

As for the projects on discrimination, ecosoc, and the Working group on Justice, Isaías Barreñada asked whether the Secretariat was waiting for funding to launch these projects. He added that during the General Assembly on 1-3 June 2012, the participants had suggested many issues in relation to ecosoc, for instance cultural identity that has not been part of the EMHRN's activities until now. Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that it was not solely a question of financial resources but also of human resources. He suggested discussing the issue of ecosoc at the next EC meeting on 14-16 June 2013.

Role of the political referent

Nassera Dutour mentioned that the tasks and responsibilities of the political referent were not clear to her which had been underlined by an incident taking place in relation to the organization of the seminar on women's rights in Algiers, an initiative of both the Gender Working group and the Solidarity Working group where Alya Cherif Chamhari had felt that she had not been sufficiently involved in the process, being the political referent of the Gender Working group.

Alya Cherif Chamhari added that she had been invited for the seminar before she had become the political referent of the Gender Working group; however she did not feel involved in the process and decided not to attend the seminar after all.

Michel Tubiana said that the role of the political referent is to make sure that the orientations of the EC are in line with the work of the Working group. Although there had been some confusion in relation to the coordination of the seminar, he did not think that it was a reason for reconsidering the role of the political referent but it was rather a question of improving the internal communication.

Decision:

- The EC adopted the Work plans of the different Working groups

Documents:

10.1 Overview of the Working group's work plans

11. Gender program and gender mainstreaming

Moderator: Eugenia Papamakariou

Marit Flø Jørgensen made a presentation of the gender mainstreaming commitments of the EMHRN and asked the EC to agree on the priorities in relation to the identified challenges, some of them being that there is a gap between the commitments and the implementation of gender equality, that the boards of the EMHRN members are still composed by mostly men, and that gender mainstreaming is not a priority of members for different reasons (lack of resources, lack of gender competences for instance). The EMHRN could among others try to communicate the gender mainstreaming work to the whole EMHRN, focus on the EMHRN members, have yearly meeting of the gender focal points and organize gender mainstreaming trainings.



Following Marit Flø Jørgensen's presentation, Alya Cherif Chammari said that the decision makers at the highest level should be convinced of the gender mainstreaming policy as women's rights are at the heart of any true democracy. She suggested focusing on the gender mainstreaming of member organizations as gender mainstreaming should be cross cutting to all structures of the EMHRN.

Michel Tubiana agreed with the outcome of the audit, i.e. that there is still a wide gap between the gender mainstreaming principles and what is happening on the ground. The issue of gender equality is mentioned in the EMHRN's Statutes, By laws etc. but it should also be put into practice. A part from the gap between the principles in the documents and their implementation, there was also a gap between the principles and the environment that the EMHRN is living in. He raised the question as to how many organizations do actually use the gender mainstreaming kit, even the women's rights organizations. He also asked whether everything should be looked upon from the gender perspective. Michel Tubiana then suggested organizing a training program in gender mainstreaming for the EMHRN members if the donors would agree to fund it, and appointing a person in each Working group who could ensure that the gender mainstreaming is being implemented and who could meet to discuss the issue among them. Anitta Kynsilehto agreed to his suggestions.

Marc Schade-Poulsen was also in favour of the idea to appoint one person in each Working group who will be responsible for gender mainstreaming. According to him, the debate on how to promote gender mainstreaming had however not yet been settled. Marit Flø Jørgensen said that it was not everything that had to be gender mainstreamed but that an analysis should be carried out in order to know when it would be relevant.

Decisions:

- The Working groups should be informed that they should each have a gender focal point that should ensure gender mainstreaming within the Working group activities and documents
- The gender focal points from the different Working groups should hold an annual meeting
- The Secretariat to look into funding possibilities for a training program on gender mainstreaming for the EMHRN members and staff members

Documents:

- 11.1 Gender audit
- 11.2 Gender Equality Policy paper (GEPP)

12. Membership issues

Moderator: Mahmoud Abu Rahma

Michel Tubiana introduced the session by saying that the issue of membership criteria had been discussed many times by the EC. As it is now, the EC decides which members should be admitted and the General Assembly ratifies the new memberships. He then presented the *12.3 Report on the stakes and financial consequences of increased membership*. He noted that there are some statutory as well as financial limitations to the composition of members, being for instance the equal number of organisations from the North and South of the Mediterranean, and the costs related to the members' participation in EMHRN meetings. A part from these, another three points should be kept in mind; 1) the Statutes do not prevent the admission of confessional organizations, 2) the composition of member organisations is not mentioned in the Statutes, and 3) there is no ceiling to the number of organizations per country.

Michel Tubiana thought that the EC should arrive at a number of members/ country, possibly a total of approx. 80 members with four organizations/ country in average. The number of members/ country would vary from country to country but the EMHRN should be able to clarify why certain organisations are adopted as members and others not. Also the procedure for radiation of members should be considered and the Statutes amended accordingly. It could also be envisaged to set up a conflict committee to settle the expulsion and avoid it to be discussed at the General Assembly.



Michel Tubiana also suggested examining the situation of members on a regular basis and from a political point of view, and possibly employing a staff member to be in constant contact with them. He then invited the EC to come with concrete suggestions on the issue of membership before the next EC meeting on 14-16 June 2013.

Decisions:

- The EC should discuss the membership criteria at their next meeting on June 14-16 2013. Michel Tubiana and Marc Schade-Poulsen should make concrete proposals to the EC
- Michel Tubiana should suggest possible amendments to the Statutes in relation to the radiation of members
- The EC adopted the Ligue de l'Enseignement as a Regular member

Documents:

- 12.1 Membership overview (*for information*)
- 12.2 Membership application overview (*for information*)
- 12.3 Report on the stakes and financial consequences of increased membership (*for discussion*)
- 12.4 Pending applications

13. Discrimination: what future program for the EMHRN

Moderator: Mahmoud Abu Rahma

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed the EC that the EMHRN had not dealt systematically with discrimination before, and that the Network has not defined exactly what it wants to do, the issue being very broad. Until now, the EMHRN had participated in a couple of meetings on the EU guidelines on religious discrimination. In 2013, the EU will have a call for proposals on discrimination of religious minorities; however the EMHRN will not apply unless the EC agrees to take this direction for the work on discrimination.

Eugenia Papamakariou reminded the EC that according to the decision of the General Assembly on 1-3 June 2012, the focus should be on freedom of conscience, religious freedoms and human rights, and thus not on xenophobia and racism. She thought that it would be an added value to the EMHRN if the Network could work on differences and similarities between the North and the South on these issues. She asked if the EMHRN could proceed with the issue without a Project coordination and whether the EMHRN should wait until the funds are in place.

Isaías Barreñada thought that it would be very interesting to work on the issue of discrimination; however he asked how the EMHRN will define discrimination within the European instruments of human rights. He furthermore suggested analysing some of the conflicts in the region according to identity discrimination.

Alya Cherif Chamhari said that discrimination based on religion is very important as it is infiltrating everything. The draft constitution in Tunisia, leaving Islam as the state religion, as well as the Islamophobia in the North could be taken into account when working on discrimination. She suggested that the first step could be to shed the light on discrimination in the North and the South and create an observatory that will allow the EC members to understand the developments in the region and start their reflections.

Michel Tubiana said that the EC should follow the decision of the General Assembly and, according to him, the point of departure for working with discrimination should be the international human rights standards, the entry points being minorities, including sexual orientations. Religious freedoms would however not be an entry point from his point of view.



Marc Schade-Poulsen said that initially the issue of discrimination was included in the Strategy and the Work plan with the purpose of looking into where there are possible common debates in the North and the South on freedom of conscience and religion etc., including issues such as Islam, the veil, the cross etc. According to him, it would be interesting for human rights movements to discuss with religious people in the South.

Mahmoud Abu Rahma said that it would be important to refer to the international standards, and, in his opinion, the EMHRN should keep a regional view of the issue of discrimination. The EC should define the broad issue of discrimination and then select the more urgent issues raised in the countries in the region where the EMHRN could add value. He also felt that the EMHRN should be cautious if speaking with religious leaders of minorities, as the minorities are very diverse, and these leaders might not be the real representatives of the minorities. As for the observatory suggested by Alya Cherif Chammari, Mahmoud Abu Rahma thought that it was too early to create it; instead he suggested hiring a consultant who could make a mapping of discrimination in the region first, including the trends and actors of the North and the South. The mapping could be a source for better reflection and help the EC to decide where the EMHRN could have an added value.

Anitta Kynsilehto agreed to Mahmoud Abu Rahma's suggestion of a mapping, however she thought that the issue of discrimination would be too broad and that the mapping instead should take point of departure in the decision of the General Assembly.

Isaías Barreñada said that discrimination is about the government and society's refusal of diversity (not only religious), and he suggested that the starting point of the work on discrimination could be diversity, as the issue of discrimination would be too broad and ambitious.

Nassera Dutour said that discrimination includes many issues that could be tackled by the EMHRN. She was however not of the opinion that freedom of consciousness should be a priority for the EMHRN although it is important. She suggested settling the EMHRN's priorities in terms of discrimination first and discussing them at the next EC meeting on 14-16 June 2013.

Michel Tubiana ended the session by saying that the EMHRN would not be able to cover all issues of discrimination, and that the EMHRN should avoid striving at an equal play between the North and the South.

Decisions:

- A mapping to be made on discriminations, the entry points being freedom of consciousness, cultural and sexual minorities
- The Secretariat should look into the possibilities for funding for discrimination

Documents:

13.1 EIDHR 2013, Annex 5 (point 2.2.c)

14. Discussion on issues for press statement

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

The EC did not issue a press statement from their meeting as the current developments in the region had already been covered in other recent press statements.

15. Miscellaneous

Moderator: Ayachi Hammami

Solidarity with Osman Isci



Ayachi Hammami reminded the EC members that they had agreed at their meeting on 28-30 September 2012 to draft a letter on Osman Isci's case that the EMHRN would ask its members to forward to the Turkish embassies in their respective countries. He suggested mobilizing the members before the trial of Osman Isci which Mahmoud Abu Rahma agreed with. Michel Tubiana volunteered to draft the letter that should be sent to all members for them to forward it to the Turkish embassies in their countries.

In addition to the letter, Mahmoud Abu Rahma suggested setting up an online petition in solidarity with Osman Isci, whereas Ayachi Hammami suggested asking Osman Isci to draft a strategy of the EMHRN for the coming years to show the media that Osman Isci is still active from prison. Michel Tubiana however informed the EC that the Human Rights Association, that Osman Isci represents, had asked the EMHRN to consider the case of Osman Isci in a broader context, namely that 72 other persons are also in detention at the moment and they should all be treated equally. Mahmoud Abu Rahma agreed saying that the EMHRN should focus on Osman Isci's case but also on the context when doing advocacy.

Marit Flø Jørgensen noted that no EC member is currently the political referent for Turkey, Osman Isci being in prison at the moment. She asked whether the Human Rights Association could be asked to find another representative for the EC or if one of the current EC members could step in for Osman Isci. However, Michel Tubiana said that Osman Isci could not be replaced as the political referent for Turkey according to the Statutes but that he or Marc Schade-Poulsen could be contacted in relation to Turkey if need be.

EuroMed NGO Platform

Michel Tubiana informed that he would represent the EMHRN at the EuroMed NGO Platform meeting the following weekend. He suggested the EMHRN to remain members of the Platform but not to present its candidature for the General Assembly of the Platform.

FIDH

Michel Tubiana informed that the FIDH will hold its congress in Istanbul in May and that there are two candidates for the presidency of the FIDH.

Venue for the next EC meeting

Marc Schade-Poulsen suggested Lebanon as the venue for the next Executive Committee meeting.

Decision:

- The next EC meeting will take place in Lebanon if Mahmoud Abu Rahma will be able to obtain the visa for Lebanon. Otherwise, it is foreseen to hold the meeting in Europe, i.e. Paris or Brussels.