



EuroMed**Rights**
Promoting human rights
in the Euro-Mediterranean region
since 1997

EuroMed Rights Executive Committee meeting

Tunis, 23-24 September 2017

Draft minutes – to be approved

The Executive Committee meeting was preceded by workshops with EuroMed Rights' staff on the strategy 2018-2021 and by 20th anniversary events, which gathered numerous Tunisian officials and representatives of the civil society, on Friday, September 22.

It was followed by meetings with Tunisian officials, among whom Caid Essebsi, President of the Republic of Tunisia, Youssef Shahid, Prime Minister and Mehdi Ben Gharbia, Minister for Civil Society, on Monday, September 25, 2017.

PARTICIPANTS

Executive Committee (EC) of EuroMed Rights:

Michel Tubiana (President), Nabia Haddouche (Vice president), Moataz El Fegiery (Treasurer), Anitta Kynsilehto, Søs Nissen, Wadih Al-Asmar, Messaoud Romdhani, Isaías Barreñada (from Saturday, September 23, 12:00 am).

Guest: Kamel Jendoubi (Honorary President)

Secretariat:

Marc Schade-Poulsen (Executive Director), Vincent Forest (Advocacy Director – on Saturday, September 23), Søren Toft (Administration, Finance and HR Director), Sarah Gjerding (Gender Programme Officer – on Saturday, September 23, in the morning), Ramy Salhi (Director of Maghreb Countries Office), Lilia Rebaï (Tunisia Programme Director) and Christel Décatoire (Executive Secretary, rapporteur).

Absent with notification:

EC members: Catherine Teule, Raffaella Bolini, Osman İşçi, Hamdi Shaqqura

AGENDA

1. Welcome, approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting on March 2017
2. Secretariat report – for approval
3. Financial report – for approval
4. KPMG report (on the administrative and financial functioning): presentation and discussion
5. Gender Strategy – for approval
6. Decision on strategy process
7. Next General Assembly – for information and decision
8. The Regional structured dialogue – for information and discussion
9. Membership issues – for information and decision



1. Welcome, approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the last EC meeting on March 2017

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Documents

- 2a. EC meeting agenda
- 2b. March 2017 EC meeting minutes

Michel Tubiana welcomed all attendees and asked for a closed session when discussing the next General Assembly (point 7. on the agenda). The EC members approved the agenda.

Decision:

The minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 24-26 March 2017 were approved without any observations.

2. Secretariat report – for approval

Moderator: Michel Tubiana / Nabia Haddouche

Documents:

- 3a. E.A.R.
- 3b. E.A.R. annexes
- 3c. Work plan 2017
- 3d. Work plan 2018

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the last activities of the Network, documented in the last E.A.R. (documents 3.a and 3.b) covering the period from April to June, adding comments on more recent events. Main points:

- **ECOSOC status (UN):** EuroMed Rights' application is still under examination. In 2018, new countries will be elected to the NGO committee; this might be an occasion to meet country representatives regarding the application.
- **Migration:** EuroMed rights follows up FRONTEX mechanisms and would like to discuss the EU migration policy on an annual regional civil society meeting, as it is done for PIP. Then, by now, no funds were raised to work on a subregional network, Turkey – Jordan – Lebanon.
- **Economic and social rights:** reports were published but no funds were identified yet to work on this theme. Though, EuroMed Rights may want to keep it as an objective in the strategy 2018-2021.
- **Algeria:** the Universal Periodic Review by the UN led to recommendations to change the association laws, which had been recommended by EuroMed Rights in the preparatory reports. Then, a mission in Tindouf is planned for the autumn but the prior agreement of the Polisario Front is required and has not yet been provided
- **Egypt:** a good meeting was held in May in Rome, even if disrupted by intruders. A low-profile mission is planned in Egypt in early October.
- **Morocco:** a dedicated programme officer was recruited recently. EuroMed Rights aims at launching three working groups by next autumn in Morocco.
- **Tunisia:** a seminar on the tripartite dialogue with EU was held in July. The recent outstanding progress in Women Rights, and EuroMed Rights' contribution to these advances, were also underlined. Lastly, the prospect of working on the PASC - Support to Civil Society Project - in 2018 was mentioned. This major project could have a strong impact on EuroMed Rights' work in Tunisia.
- **Turkey:** Funds from EU for trial observation have been recently obtained.

- **A 20th anniversary event** will be held in Brussels in October, with the possible participation of F. Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Staff and organizational issues were also mentioned, including the closure of the Paris office in 2019, the restructuration of the administrative department, which led, among others, to the layoff of an administrative officer in Paris, the upcoming move of the Brussels office and at last, the recruitment of a new Communication Director, who will start working in early October.

Comments and discussions:

- EC members raised the issue of the Network not having more activities in the north, where there are though matters of concern. Furthermore, the historical link of the organisation to EU remains a strategic point. EuroMed Rights needs to be part of the European networks, beyond EU borders.
- EC members expressed their concern about the current political situation in Spain, regarding the conflicts between the government and the separatist movement in Catalonia. Isaías Barreñada explained the historical background of this conflict and shared his analysis of the recent events. The EC members want to monitor the events in order to be ready to react.
- The human rights situation in Egypt was also discussed. Egyptian activists' situation is still very critical: a new Egyptian law could deprive them of their nationality even when living abroad. Then, even if the US and EU and other donors keep on funding them, this law could prevent NGO' activities as such. Some advances are noted in the US, through the implementation of the Magnitsky Act, that could enable the authorities to sanction two officers accused of torture. A future challenge will be to facilitate the structuring of a network of Egyptian living abroad activists and of their supporters.
- EC members regret that the Network has no member in Libya. This lies in the fact that, first, EuroMed Rights has not managed to raise dedicated funds to work on Libya, secondly, that it does not know Libya human rights associations well enough and at last, that the situation of associations is very volatile.

3. Financial report – for approval

Moderator: Moataz El Fegjery

Documents:

- 4a. Financial report 2016 (to be signed)
- 4b. Deloitte audit comments on the annual report
- 4c. Finance and budget report 2016 - 2018
- 4d. Fundraising update

Søren Toft went through the annual financial report and the related audit comments (documents 4a.,4b.). It was highlighted that the overall level of spending is stable and that since mid-2016, the proportion of project funding, against core funding, in the total funding has increased. This trend is expected to further increase in 2018, which will give less flexibility to the organization in terms of budget management.

Søren Toft also presented the 2018 estimated budget (document 4c.).

EuroMed Rights have a dream scenario for funds in 2018. 90% of unsecured funds have already been applied for. In this scenario, the activity and salary costs would increase accordingly to implement new projects i.e. "the Regional Hub for structured dialogue". The administrative costs are expected to remain stable amongst other also due to the projected closure of the Paris office

Comments and discussions:

- EC members asked for details on the revenue mix for the future meetings – in order to see how much we receive from each Donor (Sida, Danida, EU, etc.). Main donors' contributions were recalled. It is also strategic not to become too dependent on EU funds.

- EC members asked for details on the salary expense increase in the estimated budget. They reminded their concern of not increasing too much permanent staff in order to avoid problems, in case of a revenue decrease, and increasing administrative load.
EC members understand that this increase in staff could have a strong impact on the organization and on EuroMed Rights' work with partners. It was asked how the management will deal with these changes. The secretariat acknowledged that this potential growth and the integration of the work with North Africa are challenges which need to be worked on.

Decision:

The financial report 2016, the audit comments on the 2016 annual report and the budget 2016-2018 were approved by the EC.

4. KPMG report (on the administrative and financial functioning): presentation and discussion

Moderator: Wadih Al-Asmar

Documents:

- 5a. KPMG report (in English)
- 5b. KPMG report executive summary (in French)
- 5c. EMR comments on KPMG report

The review of internal management and control, ran by KPMG, was part of the Sida evaluation process. Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the KPMG report main conclusions, emphasized the very good results and focused on two major recommendations from the auditor:

- Set up a risk management system and a risk register
- Establish an anti-corruption and whistleblowing policy

EuroMed Rights management agrees on the first recommendation and would start working on a risk management using interns, by the end of the year. Regarding the second recommendation, the management agrees on developing the existing anti-corruption measures but thinks it would be disproportionate to create an anti-corruption and whistleblowing policy *per se*, as the secretariat does not handle much money.

Comments and discussions:

- EC members welcomed the very good results of the report and approved the recommendations of the auditor.
- They acknowledged that the organisation could benefit from a risk management system and a risk register. But EC members recommended to keep them simple and to take a case by case approach, as it is impossible to build a system covering all kinds of risks.
- Regarding the anti-corruption policy, EC members agreed with the management position and some highlighted that the actual risk is not corruption but embezzlement.

5. Gender Strategy – for approval

Moderator: Anitta Kynsilehto

Documents:

- 6a. Gender advocacy strategy 2016-2018
- 6b. Gender mainstreaming status report

Nabia Haddouche made a short introduction and gave the floor to Sarah Gjerding, who shared the progresses observed in gender mainstreaming (GM), according to the gender mainstreaming strategy endorsed by the EC in June 2016, and put forward suggestions for the future, including:

- Increase the responsibility of all political referents (EC members) in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their Working Groups and programmes
- Systematically put gender mainstreaming on the EC meeting agenda
- Plan and carry out a Gender Audit in 2017-2018
- Dedicate specific resources (including budget) to gender mainstreaming efforts

- Consolidate the Gender Mainstreaming task force of the Gender WG and ensure its contribution to the gender mainstreaming of the next EuroMed Rights Strategy and the Gender Audit
- Develop trainings/awareness raising workshops for member organizations

Comments and discussions:

What is Gender Mainstreaming?

- It was recalled that GM and gender based violence do not concern only women but also men. For example, men are the main victims of sexual violence in Syria. Furthermore, mainstreaming gender means including LGBT rights as well.
- GM is about evaluating how relations between men and women impact human rights issues. It also implies working on the historical, structural inequalities between men and women to bridge the gender gap.

About the Gender Working Group

- This working group works on combatting violence against women but also plays a role in promoting GM in the rest of the network. EC members discussed the ambiguity of this double role that tends to confuse members. They debated the possibility of separating these two matters.
- The current composition of the group (only women) was also a matter of discussion: some women from the group expressed the need to discuss among peers. But is it consistent with a GM approach? The possibility of including men in the working group, in the future, was discussed.

About promoting Gender Mainstreaming through the Network

- To promote GM through all working groups and within the Network, some EC members insisted that GM should be addressed both at an organisational level and at a programme level.
- Regarding working groups, some of the EC members believe that a practical and case by case approach should be fostered: what is each working group ready to do in this matter, in its current actions and working methods?
- Promoting GM among members is also a strategic issue that should be developed.
- At a political level, it was suggested that GM and promoting women's rights could be dealt with by two different referents within the EC.
- Addressing GM and violence against women issues separately could furthermore help to raise new funds dedicated to GM. The Network needs indeed more resources to address the matter properly. Why not pilot test and move gradually?

About the Gender Advocacy Strategy

- Members' commitment in the advocacy strategy should be made explicit.
- It is built on a 2016-2018 period in order to correspond to the working group's duration.

Decisions:

The separation of Gender Mainstreaming issue from the work of the Gender Working Group on promoting women's rights will be proposed to the general assembly.
The Gender Advocacy Strategy was approved.

6. Decision on the strategy process

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Document: 1c. Draft strategy

Michel Tubiana invited the EC members to share their points of agreement and of disagreements on the draft strategy proposed by the secretariat. It was recalled that the strategy has two main targets: the General Assembly and one of our strategic donors, Sida.

Comments and discussions:

Topics to be added/developed in the strategy

- **Justice:** this theme should appear in the new strategy as an ambition for the Network. EuroMed Rights has already a basis (methodology, terms of reference) to work on this subject. Addressing this matter seems to be an expectation from members.
It was furthermore recalled that the EU has important justice programmes on country level. Working on a regional or a country level was discussed. The main challenges related to this theme lie in involving members and in finding a common theme to work on (i.e. emergency law).
- **Discrimination:** the draft strategy should situate the debate but not conclude. This theme needs to be structured. LGBT rights, religious discriminations and islamophobia were mentioned as possible working themes, both in South and North. The question whether a working group would be the best way to address this matter, was raised.
- **LGBT:** EC members suggested to prioritize this issue in the new strategy. But does it have to be integrated in the discrimination or in the gender mainstreaming work theme? It was also suggested to organize a side event at the general assembly to discuss this issue.
- **Economic and Social Rights:** the approach presented in the draft strategy needs to be broadened because economic and social rights concern many other rights that are not mentioned in the document (rights to work, to health...). Integrating younger activists could also be an objective. Furthermore, the question of the added value of EuroMed Rights on this matter compared to trade unions was raised. Holding a seminar to further structure the subject and get a start was suggested.
- **Gender Mainstreaming and gender equality:** it was asked to add in the draft strategy, on one hand, that the Network gathers associations that managed to change the law in their countries and on the other hand, that those working themes concern the whole Network. A future challenge is how to involve members and develop ownership.
- **Civil society:** it should be mentioned in the new strategy that social movements are strongly developing in the South. Most of them gather young people and are based on new methods. A challenge is how to collaborate and integrate them into the Network. It was also said that the purpose of the Network is not to integrate these movements.
- **Campaigns:** the question why the Network does not use more campaigns was raised.

About the document form and structure

- The document is not too long although it should be further shortened.
- The first part of the draft strategy is a presentation of the regional context. It aims at explaining and giving a background to EuroMed Rights strategic choices and priorities. Some EC members thought that it has to be shortened because it will necessarily be incomplete and could raise useless debates. It was also suggested to put this part into an annex, as a contribution to the debate.
- For new themes (justice, discrimination...), explanations why the Network should prioritize them need to be added in the strategy. For each theme, it is also relevant to specify in relation to which institutional framework working groups would advocate.

Consulting with the members

- If the secretariat has sufficient resources to do so, send a synthetic draft strategy to members and ask for comments before a certain deadline.

Decisions:

Michel Tubiana and Marc Schade-Poulsen will work on an updated draft strategy and share it with other EC members by the end of October.

7. Next General Assembly

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

The next general assembly was scheduled to take place in June 23-24, 2018. It will take place in Europe. The venue will be chosen taking possibilities for financial support of the general assembly into consideration.

The next EC meeting will be held in March 16-18, 2018, in Beirut.

The rest of the discussion was held in an *in camera* session.

8. The Regional structured dialogue

Moderator: Søs Nissen

Documents:

7a. Regional structured dialogue – concept note

7b. Regional structured dialogue – summary of the concept note (in French)

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the project that was submitted to the EU in response to the call for proposal “A Regional Hub for structured dialogue” (documents 7a. and 7b.). The selection progress should be completed by November 2017, for the project to start at the beginning of 2018.

The project is based on a consortium of 6 associations, including EuroMed Rights that will lead the process. A steering committee, composed of 6 members of the consortium and of 6 other partners, will among others play a role in negotiating the annual civil society forum with the EU.

The proposed activities consist in organizing:

- An annual civil forum whose main objective will be to dialogue with EU officials. EuroMed Rights will be the main organizer.
- An annual south seminar, which purpose will be to prepare the above mentioned civil forum
- 4 working groups on themes close to EuroMed Rights’ matters of interests (security, economic development, climate justice, migration...). Further negotiations with the partners would take place in order to specify outstanding roles and funding distribution within the consortium.
- An annual youth workshop

A digital platform with a chatroom and training tools will also be created.

To run this project, EuroMed Rights will hire 3 full time staff and a part-time media consultant.

As for the results, EuroMed Rights has little expectations from a political point of view. But, it hopes that the hub could help to strengthen coordination of civil society in the region as well as to create more safe spaces for dialogue and civil society work.

Comments and discussions:

It was first reminded that it was a strategic choice for EuroMed Rights to engage in this project in order to occupy the stage in front of the EU. This positioning is also consistent with EuroMed Rights organizing civil forum platforms for many years in the past.

Then, as the hub will work independently from the Network, EuroMed Rights' representation at the steering committee is strategic. The way, the EuroMed Rights' representatives at the steering committee will report to the EC, will be discussed at the next EC meeting.

EC members then discussed challenges and opportunities raised by this initiative:

Opportunities:

- Funding will provide the means to work for 3 years.
- This project will offer opportunities for networking and for contacts with high-level EU officials.
- The Network could benefit from this project by creating synergies (i.e. organizing events back to back).
- The Network could learn from the consortium members on new themes such as environment.

Challenges:

- Bringing the hub and the Network together by having some members involved in the project is a big issue.
- Negotiations among partners are expected to be tough.
- Furthermore 10% of the global budget have to be found.
- EuroMed Rights needs to take the right positioning in order not to appear as too dominant in front of the partners.
- The framework of the dialogue with the EU has not been clearly determined yet. But it is relevant for the consortium to preserve its political freedom in handling the project. Some EC members also recommended to remain vigilant that the hub does not become the only interlocutor of the EU commission.

9. Membership issues

Moderator: Isaías Barreñada

Documents:

8a. SCM Application

8b. Membership overview

8c. Membership applications 2015-2018

Decisions:

SCM's application for joining EuroMed Rights as a regular member was approved by the EC.

Review of inactive members

At every general assembly, inactive members are asked to leave in order to enable membership renewal. A list of 10 inactive members was reviewed and discussed. They will be contacted in the coming month by the secretariat in order to remind EuroMed Rights' membership requirements and to get some information about their situation and position towards the Network.



Next EC meeting in March 16-18, 2018, in Beirut.