



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Working group for the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI)

Together with:

Committee on improving quality of life, exchanges between civil societies and culture (CULT)

Committee on Economic and Financial affairs, Social affairs and Education (ECON)

MINUTES

Of the meeting of 20 February 2012, from 14.30 to 17.30

BRUSSELS

The meeting opened at 14.41 on 20 February 2013, with Mr. Gianni Pittella in chair.

Were present:

Members of the EMUNI Working Group, CULT, ECON:

European Parliament: Mr. Gianni PITTELLA (EMUNI Chair, S&D - IT); Ms. Inés AYALA SENDER (S&D, ECON - ES); Mrs. Malika BENARAB-ATTOU (Greens/EFA - FR, EMUNI, CULT); Jean ROATTA (EPP, ECON - FR)

EU national parliaments: Mr Martin GRAF (Austria, ECON); Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, CULT); Mr. Gennaro MALGIERI (MP - Italy); Ms. Ina DRUVIETE (Latvia, CULT); Mr. Lubos MARTINAK (Slovakia, CULT);

Mediterranean Partners: Mr. Mahdjoub BEDA (Algeria, ECON); Mr. Salim CHENNOUFI (Algeria, ECON); Mr. Abdelkader ZAHALI (Algeria, ECON); Mr. Abdelkader ZERROUKI (Algeria, ECON); Mr. Miloud CHORFI (Algeria, CULT); Mr. Slimane SADAoui (Algeria, CULT); Mr. Mohamed EL FEKY (Egypt, ECON); Mr. Mohamed KHASHABA (Egypt, ECON); Mr. Ali ERCOŞKUN (Turkey, ECON, CULT); Mr. Zeynep KARAHAN USLU (Turkey, EMUNI, CULT)

Non-members of the Working Group: Ms. Cristina GUTIÉRREZ-CORTINES (MEP, EPP, Spain); Mr. Adnan AL SAWAIR (Jordan, Bureau); Mr. Ouadia BENABDELLAH (Morocco, Bureau); Ms. Hakima FASLY (Morocco); Mr. Samia HERRAG (Morocco); Ms. Fatna EL-K'HIEL (Morocco);

Guest speakers: Ms. Joke **VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD** (EUROCLIO Executive, Director); Mr. Bülent **BİLGİÇ** (Representative of the Turkish Business Community); Mr. Jean-Rene **GEHAN** (Ambassador, Mediterranean Office for Youth); Mr. Charles Etienne **LAGASSE** (WBI General Inspector, Bilateral relations. FWB and COCOF Strategic referent); Mr. Rodrigo **BALLESTER** (EC, Unit for International affairs); Ms. Claire **HERRMANN** (EC, Unit for International cooperation and programs);

Chair's introductory statement

Since the three bodies of the PA-UfM often work on similar topics, it would be useful, in the respect of independence of each body, to create cooperation and synergies. The conclusions of the present enlarged meeting will be presented in the next enlarged Bureau meeting in Barcelona.

1. Adoption of agenda

No objections were raised when the agenda was presented.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting of November 28, 2012

The Chair did not put the minutes to approval, probably due to the special character of this meeting. The minutes will be re-submitted for approval on the subsequent WG EMUNI meeting.

3. Chair's announcements

Mr Pittella briefly compared the results, obtained by the Working group since the previous meeting, with the conclusions adopted during that meeting, point by point. Almost everything has been accomplished or is followed-up:

- ENPI actions for EMUNI were prolonged;
- The (present) joint meeting has been organized;
- The third conclusion was about creating networks between EMUNI and similar institutions dealing on similar topics in the Mediterranean: in order to follow-up the issue, the WG (working group) has invited to the present meeting Mr Jean René-Géhan, President of the Mediterranean Office for Youth;
- the Working group continues to encourage EMUNI to participate to the Mediterranean Youth Forum in Marseille;
- concerning Visa facilitations: WG has invited to the present meeting Mr Ballester from the EC, who deals with this very important aspect;

4. The role of the education in ensuring the stability of the Mediterranean Region

Speaker: Mrs Joke Van der Leeuw-Roord, EUROCLIO Executive Director

Mrs Van der Leeuw-Roord underlined the importance of teaching history, citizenship and heritage from the primary Education up to University. She said that luckily some interest in Education returned, while in the past twenty years Education had been widely downplayed, and there had been a decrease in expenditure for this extremely important sector.

At the same time, two UN Millennium Development Goals are dedicated to Education; in Vienna there has been recently a conference on the subject and in Qatar there has been a world summit in Education. EU is also rethinking its Educational approach, also in order to improve social inclusion.

EUROCLIO is an association of European history educators. It was founded in 1992, when Europe was under an ideological spell, caused also by some historians of questionable quality: there were a lot of history-related emotional debates between, for instance, Germany and Poland, Serbia and Croatia, Israel and Palestine...it was difficult to talk about the past.

Therefore, EUROCLIO advocated a sound use of history, based on critical thinking, and mutual respect. In which way? First of all by developing professional capacities, by connecting history teachers from different countries. At the moment members from 58 countries participate, and the membership is growing in the Mediterranean region, involved since 2011.

The approach of EUROCLIO is to only work with potential partners if they ask for it. For instance, the Anna Lindh Foundation had asked to make use of EUROCLIO expertise and transfer it to the Mediterranean region. Therefore, special mobility programs were organized with Lebanon; the association started to work in Israel, in order to establish a network of history teachers; seminars were held in Turkey. There are ongoing projects, like the one which will see, at the end of 2013, the cooperation of the Arab League in organizing a conference on the "image of the other".

What challenges is the MENA region faced with in this respect? There is a very small regional perspective in the area, we talk about the MENA, but this region is not connected at all in reality. There is a big diversity also in the needs and requirements for Education, sometimes even within countries. There is little awareness for responsible Education: the Education is often still under the political umbrella. There is little attention for innovative approaches, the method of teaching still being very traditional (based on memorization). Unfortunately, there is a low level of professional development, especially for life long learning.

In conclusion, Mrs Leeuw-Roord advised to address sensitive issues, not to avoid them! She also suggests including other communities in order to realize that "our" problems are not unique. She stressed the importance of the media and suggested using them as well.

5. How can cooperation be developed among the universities and the private sector?

Speaker: Mr Bülent Bilgic, Representative of the Turkish Business Community

Mr Bilgic represents the TOBB, which is a Turkish Chambers' Union, an umbrella association representing the entire Turkish business community, which means around 1, 3 million enterprises. TOBB is not only dealing with usual business promotion activities, but it is also very much involved in civil society functions and in education activity support.

It has been clear since quite some time that nations are not strong and developed for their weapons, gold or other natural resources. The most important factor consists in well educated people. Turkey is well aware of that and TOBB supports, therefore, a number of activities centered on a strong cooperation between business and universities. These activities include Internship programs, support for University Departments, and actions oriented towards the shortening of the hiring process.

Mr Bilgic added that Turkey is transforming its institutions, also educational ones, at a fast pace. The goal is to insert the country among the top 10 economies by the year 2013, which means allocating high investment! Already today Turkey dedicates 17% of its budget for Educational purposes! University inscriptions increased dramatically, with the number of students reaching 2, 3 million. Nevertheless, Turkey still lags significantly behind other Western countries, if we compare the added value of the national economy per capita. This is the reason why TOBB is so active in Education, by promoting three internship programs, creating small, specialized Universities, where 45% of the students may obtain grants and scholarships.

In conclusion, given the current development trends, it is crucial for industry to be in cooperation with universities for the future of Turkey.

Mr Pittella passed the presidency to Mr Gennaro Malgieri, due to his concurrent working commitments.

Mr Malgieri thanked the Chair and everybody else for the participation. He opened the debate on the previous two points.

Mrs Benarab Attou said History is essential. She suggested organizing a Conference on the historical literary heritage of the Mediterranean, as a way to give a better shape to the UfM.

Mrs Leeuw-Roord answered there is a project called Historiana on-line. It is a comprehensive database, aimed to attract and address especially young people.

Mr Khashaba represents the Revolution Parliament in Egypt; he is attending for the first time. He thanked Mrs Leeuw-Roord for having mentioned the plan against illiteracy in Egypt. He added that yes, we need a real connection between North and South. In Egypt there are Muslims, Jews and Christians, and they have lived at all times in peace. There are common

denominators and real common features. Reviving the educational system in Egypt will only be possible in a context of economic and political stability. Mr Khashaba pointed out that the EU supported long years of dictatorship in Egypt. This caused more illiteracy. He concluded that in the Gaza strip children have no access to schools: it is very important for everybody to take this into consideration!

Mr Malgieri warmly welcomed the new colleagues from Egypt. He pointed out that we have had a common history for many thousands of years. Mr Malgieri studied Roman Law and found elements of Pharaoh Law inside. The PA-UfM duty is to revive these links.

Mrs Karahan Uzlu said there are still children without access to school not only in Palestine, but in many other countries, maybe millions, and many countries present in the room had a role to play. She added we should discuss about more concrete solutions. A good idea would be to share best practices and experiences on concrete business models: she highlighted the model in Turkey: at TOBB University, a student has to spend three months as an employee with social security, therefore all the students actually work in an enterprise, also abroad, for example in Germany. It is much easier to find the job afterwards! She gave one more example: The Turkish Ministry of Industry started to invest in youth. Grants have been given to the students' projects, up to 100.000 dollars. The most successful developers are then sent to the Silicon Valley. She suggested sharing concrete models that work in different countries.

Ms El-K'Hiel said that in Morocco the Education reform started in 1997. In universities there are now representatives of students, teachers, companies, and business communities. There is a problem, however: the number of students is too high for local capacities, therefore contracts have been signed with some European Universities in order to extend the offer to Moroccan students. High mark is required to enter in a University in Morocco today. **Ms El-K'Hiel** therefore asked help to the Assembly in order for Morocco to achieve the same speed of results.

Mr Malgieri said the problem will certainly be improved with the Fez University enhanced Mediterranean activity. Fez University is the oldest one in the Mediterranean area!

Mrs Kiel said Universities must be the core of any elite, therefore integrated in the whole system, starting with primary schools. Stability fosters education, but even in countries with a high degree of stability, especially rural areas suffer from lack of Educational and communication possibilities. Will Fez University really be able to have the necessary facilities to catalyze the huge Mediterranean area potential - she asks. She concludes that real democracy means more regionalization, devolvement, macro-regional Universities. Morocco and Italy have a very strong friendship. She invited everybody to Rabat in 2013. **Mr Malgieri** thanked and added that he will indeed go to Rabat for the Meeting of the Council of Europe.

Mr Sadaoui asked how you can overcome past deeds, such as the killing of your close relatives. How can you forget? He also said that we need to resolve the Palestinian question without politicians. He mentioned the Western Sahara problem, which remains unresolved.

Another speaker said our children of today will be our leaders tomorrow: they should be

safe, free to go to school, free to circulate. Syrian children are facing hardships. Jordan receives 1500 refugees from Syria every day, without access to schools; measures have to be taken in order to support these children. He concluded that we can teach history in different ways, but if we want to look to the future, in our programs we should focus on the right methodology, and teach reciprocal respect.

Mrs Leeuw-Roord said that EUROCLIO is not trying to make history more beautiful, but a dialogue is needed, on the basis of trust and professionalism.

6. Mediterranean Office for Youth

Speaker: Mr Jean-René Géhan, Ambassador, Mediterranean Office for Youth

Mediterranean Office for Youth works in a very particular context characterized by the presence, in the Arab world, of a new generation of young people at high risk of unemployment and dominated by a frustrating feeling of being lost. Mediterranean Sea is an area of contact, frontier and conflict, where education of young people is especially crucial. There is a need, therefore, to create a Euro-Mediterranean area. But, as we all know, the budgetary situation is difficult, and Europe is divided between a bilateral and a multilateral approach. So, we need to see things in a rational way.

Mediterranean Office for Youth has been created two years ago. It is a French initiative, which sees the participation of 16 partner countries. It is a light structure with only two and a half people employed. It deals with:

- Co-diploma education in areas, which are seen as most useful for obtaining a job;
- Grants for mobility;
- Visa facilitation: as a matter of fact, the French Ministry of Interior participates to the programme;

Mobility remains, however, de facto essentially South-North. There are some apprenticeship possibilities as well. The financing of the two people working full time for the Office is assured by France, while grants and scholarships are assured by the partner countries. The result up to now is modest, compared to other similar programmes: 80 institutions participate, with a year turnover of around 100-150 students. The programme has been welcomed by the higher education institutions, probably because of appreciation of a creation of an international brand, and for light and easily understandable procedures. The weak point remains the financing, which is done on a voluntary basis and is mainly dependent on France. Another weak point consists in the fact that mobility North - South is not really developed, only vice versa.

The moment has come to coordinate the efforts among the existing realities and with existing possibilities: in this context, Mr Géhan sees the partnership between Fez and EMUNI as "natural".

Moreover, professional training has to be improved, maybe through professional training dedicated schools, like in the US or Asia.

7. Cooperation between EMUNI and National Cultural Institutes with long tradition of working in the Mediterranean area

Speaker: Mr Charles-Etienne Lagasse, WBI General Inspector, Bilateral Relations, FWB and COCOF Strategic referent

EUNIC includes today 29 members (National Institutes for Culture) from 24 countries. Its mission is to promote the European culture in Europe and outside it. For this goal, EUNIC currently has a presence in 150 countries of the world, and can certainly be considered as a complementary tool of the EU foreign policy. EUNIC is chaired by three rotating countries. Operationally, EUNIC works divided in clusters. Currently there are 80 clusters in 80 different cities, mainly country capitals. Among them, there are 7 Arab countries. Recently EUNIC created 2 pilot programmes, one with China and the other with the MENA region. The goal of the pilot programme is to scan the region in order to find out what are the region's cultural priorities, and organize events to this purpose. There has been, for instance, an important symposium in Jordan, organized by Jordanian EUNIC cluster, named "creative Jordan". More than 120 people participated, mostly from Arab countries, including governmental instances. There has been a seminar in Beirut last November. The goal is to establish a democratic cultural policy with the actors of the region. Mrs El Benaoui is structuring, at the same time, the European offer to the Arab demand. This offer should work on the principle "à la carte", which means that the Arab partners will be free to choose their priority, and they will be addressed, according to their choice, towards the European Cultural Institution offering that kind of programme, or something similar. The big problem of EUNIC is financing: funds are insufficient; therefore EUNIC counts on the EU!

Mr Malgieri links to the speech of Mr Lagasse by underlining the serious problem of a lack of information about the euro-Mediterranean activity in the framework of national Parliaments and Governments. This is certainly one of the causes of the lack of funding. Mr Malgieri said he would present this problem during the next plenary session of the PA-UfM.

Mr Chorfi said higher education in Algeria is rather developed: there are 1, 5 million students from 63 universities and high school institutes. Education is very important in creating stability in the region. Without stability, there cannot be any development. Concerning the Mediterranean Office for Youth, Mr Chofri commended the French effort to increase mobility, but he also added that an easier access to visas is required. Finally, he suggests giving more room to student creativity in order to promote innovation. There is also a necessity to put in place a consistent number of internships.

A member spoke about the Palestinian issue: he stated that we should find consensus and speak with a common voice, by including members from Israel and from Palestine to the Assembly.

Mrs Benarab Attou spoke about the creation of a platform for the Mediterranean and also asked Mr Lagasse how can we work at a really European level, not just at a national level? She also pointed out that programmes and actions should include younger students, not only

the already specialised ones. An increase in professional training would also be desirable.

Mr Géhan answered that there is an agreement with the French Ministry of Interior concerning visas, so the students, which are chosen for the Mediterranean Office for Youth programmes, automatically obtain the visa. He adds that we should certainly go towards a common platform, but this must be decided on a political level. For example, for the Eastern neighbourhood, there was a platform, opened by a regionally oriented approach.

Mr Lagasse answers to Mrs Benarab Attou that EUNIC is the answer to her question. As a matter of fact, EUNIC always acts collectively, representing Europe as such. He deplores that there is no budget, at the European level, specifically dedicated to cultural actions.

8. Visa facilitations for researchers, professors and students of the Mediterranean area

Speaker: Mr Rodrigo Ballester, EC, Unit for International Affairs, mobility partnership; International relations - West African Countries, African Union

Mobility is an important part of the EU's answer to the Arab Spring. Now, there are two separate Directives concerning visas, one for students and one for researchers. Commission realized, however, that in these Directives there are certain weaknesses:

1. Not necessarily there is a link between visas and permits to stay;
2. There is no time limit for a State to answer to a visa request;
3. There is no possibility to remain on the EU territory after finishing the studies. A student is obliged to leave immediately.

The Directives are weak because at that time they had to be adopted by unanimity in the Council. However, nowadays the ordinary legislative procedure is used, with a qualified majority voting. Therefore, the Commission is rather confident in making a more incisive piece of legislation with the revision it recently launched: in addition, the two existent Directives will be unified in one single Directive. This single Directive is almost ready, and will be soon discussed by the co-legislators.

There is a special Mobility Partnership process, launched, for now, with Tunisia and Morocco, concerning the MENA region. With Morocco negotiations are very advanced. Also the Member States participate to these negotiations, and this is very important, since they have exclusive competency for visas longer than three months.

9. Enhancing the twinnings among universities from the Northern and the Southern shore of the Mediterranean;

Speaker: Ms Claire Herrmann, EC, Unit for International cooperation and programs; Jean Monnet; Policy Officer - Southern Mediterranean countries

The European Commission has been organising consistent Partnerships in the Mediterranean, which have seen an increase of students from 600 to 1500, and an increase in the number of

concrete partnerships from 5 to 11. These partnerships involve many actors. On the other side, short term student and researcher mobility continues with "Erasmus Mundus action II". There is also the aspect of longer term mobility, which is of course more expensive and foresees common Master and PhD programmes. There have been 35 students benefitting from it recently, and it is particularly targeting Tunisia and Egypt. These actions are beneficial on one side to the students, because they improve the recognition of their Diplomas and they learn another language, and on the other side for the institutes, since they have the possibility, in this way, to revise their teaching methods. There is also the programme Tempus, which aims to the modernization of university curricula with Eastern and Southern partners. It creates partnerships among EU and neighbourhood countries universities in order to reach this goal. Modernisation of infrastructures is also included. The budget of Tempus dramatically increased this year, passing from 11 to more than 40 million Euros, so now it would be good to profit from this increase!

Concerning the future, EU is currently re-discussing its Multiannual financial framework. The Commission's proposal is to unify different Erasmus's in one programme, "Erasmus for all". It will mainly deal with short term mobility; neighbouring countries (Mediterranean) will be included as well. There are also going to be other joint Master and PhD programmes. Commission proposed an increase of 70% in financing "Erasmus for all", but the Council does not agree with such a consistent increase. So, Mrs Herrmann added, a strong support from the EP is needed.

There is also a programme called "Youth in Action", which is open to Mediterranean countries. Many hundreds of students are involved every year!

On the other side it is true that the idea of a Platform is less developed with the Southern than with the Eastern EU partners. There are nevertheless two initiatives:

1. There has been a dialogue with the Ministries of Education of the Mediterranean countries, from which it appeared clear that there is a bigger need for information, which was subsequently reinforced;
2. There has been a conference in June 2012 in Cyprus concerning Education on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean; in addition, a Seminar on Education quality is foreseen to take place soon;

A debate with many speakers followed: an Egyptian colleague, Chair of the Egyptian Parliamentary Committee dealing with Education, pointed out that it would be good to have the possibility to obtain a visa for Southern researchers and professors in order for them to be able to participate in Seminars and Conferences organized in the EU, just for a couple of days. Moreover, he communicated to Mrs Herrmann that Egypt is very interested in University partnerships. Another colleague pointed out that all the programs of Erasmus Mundus should be also available to the Mediterranean students, not only some of them. Mrs Benarab Attou asked Mrs Herrmann what happened with the EP written statement on Erasmus Mundus sent to the Commission some time ago. Another colleague asked to deal also with South-South mobility, pointing out that Morocco hosts many students from Sub-Saharan Africa. Vocational training was briefly discussed. Mr Malgieri eventually stressed that, in order to be really efficient, our meetings have to lead to developments, transferring action from Parliaments to Governments; otherwise the UfM will fail again, after the failure of its predecessor, the Barcelona process.

Herrmann: Erasmus Euromed was incorporated in "Erasmus for All". In the Development Unit, there are, in the framework of multilateral cooperation, bilateral envelopes. The one "EU-Egypt" is currently especially consistent. There is also a special cooperation in order to bring expertise to the Southern Mediterranean. This is the task of European Training Foundation, located in Turin.

Ballester: With "Visa facilitation Agreements" it will be possible to obtain a multiple entry, or long term, visa.

Mr Erdoskun said this was a very beneficial meeting for all of us, with the boldest spectrum in topics and speakers! He thanked the Egyptian colleagues; he added that we are in a process of historical transformation in the Mediterranean area. He thanked Mr Malgieri, and he added that he hopes the future meetings will be as dynamic as today. He added that we will hopefully soon have a budget, and that he hopes more concrete decisions and concrete actions will be undertaken thanks to the plenary session.

Mr Malgieri thanked the speakers and made the following conclusions:

- Following a proposal of Mrs Benarab-Attou, it was decided to submit to the next Plenary session to organise a comprehensive event on the History of the Mediterranean, with a panel of experts on the literary tradition building bridges between the two shores of the Mediterranean;
- The Pa-UfM bodies will sustain the "Partnership for Mobility" implemented by the Commission towards Tunisia and Morocco. They will sustain the potential enlargement of its application to other Mediterranean countries;
- The activities of EUNIC will be supported. EMUNI will be involved in the activities of EUNIC and vice versa.
- Actions will be taken in order to better inform the national Parliaments and Governments about the activities of the PA-UfM, with a view of obtaining more political, organizational and financial support;
- the CULT, ECON and EMUNI working bodies could better coordinate their activities on aspects related to Culture and Education;
- The three bodies will promote ways to enhance contacts between business world and universities;
- PA - UfM will endeavour to support the approval, by the European Parliament in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure, of Commission's proposal to increase funds for "Erasmus for All" programme by 70%;

10. Any other business

None.

11. Date and place of the next meeting

Not decided yet.