

PARLEMENT EUROPEEN



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Euromed

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**NOTE FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBERS
OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION**

ON THE

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

I INTRODUCTION

1. The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) was launched in Greece, the birthplace of democracy, on 22 March 2004.

This **inaugural session of the EMPA** marks a significant advance for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. The Assembly combines both a new visibility and a new dimension of popular interest and democratic impetus in the Barcelona Process.

Unquestionably, this first meeting of the EMPA represents a milestone in the short history of Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary co-operation, as the Parliamentary Assembly will succeed the Parliamentary Forum that started in the framework of the Barcelona process.

2. Another aspect that should be emphasised is the **enlargement of the Assembly** with the participation for the first time, of the new EU Members States. The Parliaments of the candidate countries (Romania and Bulgaria) and the Western Balkan States were likewise invited by the Presidency to attend.

During the meeting the Assembly approved the **Rules of Procedure** submitted by the Working Party, a text which is the result of nearly five years' work (**attached in annex 1**).

Once the Rules of Procedure were adopted, the bodies of the EMPA (the Bureau, consisting of a President and three Vice-Presidents, and the Bureau of the three parliamentary committees) and their order of rotation were also approved by the Assembly, following separate meetings of the Mediterranean component and the European component.

The composition of the first Bureau of the EMPA for the period 2004-2008 and of the bureau of the three Parliamentary Committees for 2004-2006, is attached in annex 2.

II ANTECEDENTS

3. The Barcelona declaration (28 November 1995) did not foresee a Parliamentary Assembly as an instrument of the political dialogue undertaken under its auspices. Nevertheless, it encouraged "*contacts between parliamentarians*" and invited "*the **European Parliament**, with other Parliaments, to take the initiative of launching the Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue*", allowing the elected representatives of the various partner countries to exchange views on a wide range of subjects.

In response to this invitation, a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum was set up in October 1998, thus laying the foundations of a political dialogue between MPs the parliaments of the Mediterranean partner countries of the Barcelona Process (including the national parliaments of the Member States of the EU) and the EP.

From the beginning, the Parliamentary Forum has operated, both in plenary and in working parties, on the basis of the fundamental principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, namely equality, co-responsibility and solidarity amongst all the representatives involved. To this end, the Forum equipped itself with a range of

institutional provisions which have allowed it to meet in plenary session for **five** times and several times in the shape of working parties (on "Rules of procedure", "migration and human exchanges", "declaration follow up" and "EMPA").

In fact, the Forum has gathered significant experience of political dialogue, resulting in the adoption by consensus of joint resolutions on all three strands of Barcelona Process, and in particular on migration and human exchanges (see for instance attached annex 3).

4. In its resolution of 11 April 2002 (ESTEVE Report), the European Parliament "*proposed that a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly be established*" (see attached in annex 4).

The Fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers, held in Valencia on 22 and 23 April 2002, recommended "*the strengthening of the Parliamentary dimension through the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, as proposed by the European Parliament* ." At the half-term Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference in Crete on 26 and 27 May 2003, the Ministers decided to include a provision according to which the envisaged Parliamentary Assembly **will play a consultative role**, within the framework of the Barcelona process, once the EP and the Euro-Mediterranean national parliaments had reached agreement on its establishment.

5. In this connection the fourth sitting of the Euromed Parliamentary Forum in Bari (Italy) on 17 and 18 June 2002 set up a working party with the remit of preparing the "Charter for the new body".

This working Party met twice (on 5 February and on 16 April and 17 October 2003) and in the light of the opinions submitted by the member parliaments in response to the questionnaire sent out by the Working Party's Co-Presidency, the latter reached unanimous agreement on the essential features of the EMPA.

6. The results achieved by the working Party were approved in their entirety by the Fifth Parliamentary Forum on 2 December 2003. The VIth Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers held in Naples on 2 and 3 December 2003 "*welcomed the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and agreed to include this new body, in a consultative capacity, in the framework of the Barcelona Process. They expressed their conviction that this step will provide the Process with further visibility and transparency, thereby bringing the Partnership itself closer to the interests and expectations of public opinions in the region. In this context, the Ministers stressed that the Assembly will add to the depth of the Barcelona Process, ensuring complementarity with the existing institutions of the Partnership. The text of the Recommendation from the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum to the Ministerial Conference is attached.*"

III THE CHARTER AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EMPA

7. The terms of the agreement reached by the Fifth Parliamentary Forum and assumed by the VIth Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers, which makes it possible to proceed to convert the Forum into an Assembly my been summarised as follows:

Composition of the EMPA

- The Assembly composition is as follow:
 - EU component: 120 members (75 [25 countries x 3] from national parliaments and 45 from the European Parliament).
 - PMPC (Parliaments of the Mediterranean partner countries): 120 members (10 countries x 12)
 - Total size of the Assembly: 240 members.
- The Membership of the Assembly is **voluntary** and the Fifth Forum encourages, nonetheless, those Parliaments, which are still reticent as to possible participation, to involve themselves in the Assembly's activities.

In order to avoid that proposals to re-distribute any vacant seats will be put before the Assembly, Rule 1(3) of the Rules of Procedure (see attached in Annex 4) States that: *the seats which will possibly not be occupied remain at the disposal of the parliaments to which they have been allocated.*

- The Assembly shall be organised on the basis of delegations from each national parliament and the EP, not by political groups.
- The member's parliaments shall undertake to ensure that women parliamentarians are represented in their delegations supporting therefore the participation of women in all Assembly bodies.

Presidency of the Assembly

- The **Bureau** of the Assembly shall consist of four members: two appointed by the parliaments of the Mediterranean partner countries, one by the EU national parliaments and one by the EP.

One of them shall, by rotation and on an annual basis, hold the Presidency thus guaranteeing parity and alternate South/North presidencies. The Bureau shall coordinate the work of the Assembly.

The structure of the Assembly

- The Assembly shall be organised in three parliamentary committees, with the remit of dealing with the three strands of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership:
 - a) Committee on political affairs, security and human rights;
 - b) Committee on economic and financial affairs, social affairs and education
 - c) Committee on improving quality of life, exchanges between civil societies and culture.
- Each parliamentary committee (80 members, 40 members from the PMPC, 25 members of the EU national parliaments and 15 members of the EP) shall meet **at least** once a year and may meet between sessions of the Assembly.
- The Assembly may decide to set up ad hoc committees, if necessary.

Competencies of the Assembly

- As laid down in Rule 3, the Assembly shall be able to adopt resolutions and address recommendations to the Ministerial Conference with a view to achieving the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In particular, the Assembly shall monitor the application of the Euro-Mediterranean association agreements.
The deliberations of the Assembly shall not be legally binding.

Decision-making

- The Assembly shall adopt its resolutions by consensus and in the presence of half of the delegation plus one within each of the two component parts of the Assembly (the European component and that of the partner countries).

When it is not possible to reach a consensus, decision shall be adopted with a qualified majority of at least 4/5 of the votes of the representatives from each of the two parties of the European component (NP and EP) and of at least 4/5 of the votes of the representatives from the partner countries. (This last rule was adopted by the Assembly with the reservation of the Israel delegation).

- Each delegation shall have a number of votes equal to the number allocated to it.

Formal link between the Assembly and the Ministerial Conference

- As laid down in Rule 6 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the role of the Assembly shall be **complementary** to the other institutions of the Barcelona Process.

The Assembly wishes to seek a formal link between the Ministerial Conference and the EMPA. Nevertheless, the practical details of this link need to be defined (mutual representation at their respective meetings, due account of their respective work when drawing up agendas, etc.) which, in any case, should safeguard two institutions.

During the inaugural session of the EMPA in Athens on 22 march 2004, the Presidency-in-Office, the Minister of Foreign affairs of Ireland sent a message where he states the will of the Ministerial Conference to work with the Assembly in a spirit of co-operation and trust.

"We shall seek the Assembly's views on important matters across the chapters of the Barcelona Process and this institutional collaboration cannot but strengthen and invigorate the way in which we develop the partnership in the period ahead. In bringing together the three existing EU-Mediterranean parliamentary fora, the Assembly is a significant step forward in the development of that responsibility".

Commissioner, Christopher PATTEN, also reiterated the European Commission's readiness to co-operate fully with the Assembly suggesting a flexible approach for the relationship between the Assembly and the ministerial Conference giving the Assembly the right to comment on any subject of interest to it, while not overburdening the institutional arrangements of the Partnership.

Financing the Assembly

- The EMPA is not an institution created by an international treaty, it has neither a legal personality nor financial autonomy. The new Assembly cannot therefore, dispose of its own budget at this stage.
- The model of Assembly which has inspired the working Party responsible for the drafting of the Rules of Procedure of the EMPA, aims at reducing, as much as possible, the cost related to the functioning of this new institution of Barcelona Process.

The parliament that is organising a session of the Assembly or a meeting of one of its committees shall be responsible for the practical arrangements for the session or meeting and, in particular cases, the Assembly may decide that a contribution from the other parliaments that are members of the EMPA is necessary to cover the costs incurred.

The organisation and costs of interpretation into the working languages (French, English and Arabic) shall be met by all the delegation except when a session of the Assembly or a committee meeting is organised by the EP.

When necessary, the Assembly's running costs should be met on a fair, solidarity-inspired basis involving all the delegation represented, proportional to the wealth of each country.

- It goes without saying that the EMPA will be called upon to work effectively using a relatively simple structure. Since many EU Parliaments are advocating a lightweight, flexible Secretariat, Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure states that the Bureau and the other bodies of the Assembly shall be assisted by a **small-scale Secretariat** composed of staff from each of the parliaments represented in the Bureau and co-ordinated by the staff member from the parliament whose representative in the Bureau holds the Presidency at the time (COSAC Secretariat model).
- Finally, the Assembly may decide to grant **permanent observer status** to regional parliamentary organisations (such as the Parliamentary Assembly of Mediterranean States, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE) playing also a political role in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

The Conference of Presidents/ Speakers of Euro-Mediterranean Parliaments and the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Women Parliamentarians will be also actively engaged in the work of this Assembly.

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