

**XXIV Malta Seminar  
11-14 April 2008**

## **The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA)**

Good morning Ladies & Gentlemen, Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues & participants at the 24<sup>th</sup> Malta  
Seminar,

The author, *Michael Reinprecht*, Head of  
EuroMed Unit, European Parliament, Brussels,  
alumni of DAK and an Austrian career diplomat,  
has the honor to address you in his new capacity of  
Head of EuroMed Unit EP.

Thank you for the invitation/opportunity to make this  
presentation in wonderful settings of Malta in order  
to share with you ideas & exchange views on an issue  
that interests us all:

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership ( B – P )  
& in particular its parliamentary dimension: EMPA

It is the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona  
process, which is the issue, the E.M.P.A. on which  
I was asked to give an introduction and an  
overview.

(Ed. note: The reader should simultaneously consult the PP presentation by the author, which  
is also available on the EMS website.)

Recently, just a bit more than two weeks ago – on 27 / 28 March, 2008, the EMPA Plenary Session took place in Athens. (2005 Cairo 1<sup>st</sup> - 2006 Brussels 2<sup>nd</sup> - 2007 Tunis)

Let's have a look at the outcome:

“Energy & environment – perspectives for the EuroMed cooperation” – was the main issue

- “ *both sides of the Med.. must work together on the many urgent envi. issues affecting the region: deforestation, water shortages, maintenance of the eco-equilibrium.*”  
EP-President (and *then* EMPA VP H-G Pöttering said in opening speech: “*We must act – we must act NOW*”
- the Final Declaration (of the Greek Pres.) reflects the following debate – asking for the establishments of an “*EuroMed Energy Community (EMEC)*”, which should contribute to energy security of supply and attract investments of the sector in the region .....

High level participation & opening speeches of:  
Jose-Manuel Barroso (EC) - Kostas Karamanlis (PM Greece)  
Stavros Dimas (EC Env.) & State Sec. Dusan Lesjak ( Slovenia)

Middle East (as usually) in centre of debate

- ( EMPA only parl. body where Knesset + Palestine parliamentarians are in: together
- “overshadowed” by release of “Fitna” :
  - EMPA Bureau declaration
  - Plenary decides to ask CoPo & CULT to prepare report on “freedom of expression & role of media regarding issue of caricatures on Prophet Mohammad & Fitna (dutch MP Geert Wilders)

The new EMPA-Bureau (2<sup>nd</sup> term !), Presidencies & the composition of COM's Bureaus decided

Rules of Procedures amended:

- Integration of ROMANIA & BULGARIA needed change in MPs numbers
- Women COM now standing & new *ad hoc* Energy & Env.
- Decision making procedure adapted (2/3 in stead of 4/5)
- Basic decision on EMPA Secretariat ...
- Budget & financing postponed – following Paris 13<sup>th</sup> July Summit ...

And the 27/28 March Athens Plenary welcomed

*“the fresh impetus given to the Barcelona Process by the proposal of an Union for the Med, as recently (mid-March) endorsed by the EU Spring Summit” = art.13 CoPo*

In the Final Declaration of the Presidency it reads:

*“ the EMPA notes the statement made by the European Council on ‘Barcelona Process: Union for the Med’ and expresses its support towards developing initiatives to further promote the Euro-Med... dialogue and calls on the EC to enhance EMPA’s role, including a reinforced legal basis, as the legitimised parliamentary dimension of the revised process”.*

EP-President H-G Pöttering opening speech:

*“ This initiative should deepen the existing Euro-Med Partnership. We will insist that the parliamentary dimension (i.e. the EMPA) is retained” ...*

and in his speech as newly elected EMPA-President

*“I promise to keep an eye on .... That our Assembly as the only legitimised parliamentary dimension will be retained and re-enforced.... (example old/new EP....)*

Ladies & Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I suppose you'll know it.

What is that EMPA about? How does it function?  
Since when does it exist? How is it organized?  
Are decisions binding – or does it play consultative  
role? And what may be its future about?

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When the Barcelona Euro-Med Conference launched the EuroMed Partnership in November 2005, to promote an area of peace and shared prosperity via a common strategy on political & security issues, economic and cultural affairs (the 3 baskets) – Barcelona-Conference-participants recognized the need to develop inter-institutional relations further, especially at parliamentary level.

They therefore called on the EP to take action in this respect ...

( Slide 3 How it started...parliamentary dialogue ..... “which should give parliamentarians the opportunity to exchange views on a wider range of issues” = Chapter V, Barc. Decl.)

Indeed, the EP has played a leadership role in setting up the EMPA.

The creation of the EMPA<sup>2</sup> was considered being a necessity in order to reshape the existing institutional disequilibrium (in favour of the executive & the national administrations) within the Barcelona Process.

To develop inter-institutional relations further – limit the inter-governmental dimension of the partnership – democratic-scrutiny ...

But the process was slow: it took ten years to set up the Assembly formally.

The EMPA was preceded by the E-M-P-Forum, which met the first time in Brussels (Oct 1998 - shared Chairmanship Gil-Robles & Radi – Morocco)

But the EP wanted to develop the Forum further:

- In its April, 2002 - resolution, the EP urged to convert the Forum into a real Assembly
- which was in principal approved by the 5<sup>th</sup> Min. Conf. in Valencia in April 2002, and
- adopted by the 6<sup>th</sup> Min. Conf. in Naples in December 2003
- and finally on 22/23 March 2004, the inaugural sitting took place in Athens, Greece.

Under the leadership of a Bureau composed by the Presidents of the Parliaments of Greece, Egypt, Tunisia – and the EP, the EMPA was then (during its first four-years-term composed by 240 Members, 120 from N (75 EU-NP, 45 MEPs), 120 from S.

Three standing committees (CoPo, ECON, CULT) were created – mirror of the three Barcelona-baskets ...

The EMPA plays a consultative role.

Indeed, the deliberations of the Assembly are not binding.

- In Athens, two weeks ago, President Pöttering at various occasions had compared today's EMPA with the young EP in the Seventies .... and concluded:
- *“who knows, the EP now is strong, a real Parliament, a legislative body – even more with the forthcoming Lisbon-Reform-Treaty – and tomorrow the EMPA ...”*

But let's come back to reality. To the EMPA as of today:

- the Assembly adopts positions on all aspects of the Euro-Med-Partnership
- monitors the application of the Euro-Med-associations agreements
- adopts resolutions / recommendations to the Ministerial Conference ( all: art 3 Rules)
- problem of time gap between March EMPA Plenary and November EuroMed Ministerial Conference ...

These recommendations are based on reports elaborated by two rapporteurs, each one of S / N

*North-South equilibrium one of the core principles of the EMPA*

( quote from slide)

The Middle East conflict, more precisely, the settlement of Arab-Israeli conflict is – by nature! - in the centre of EMPA's debate & deliberations.

And we should not forget – as I have said before – the EMPA is the only parliamentary body where Members of the Knesset and Palestine Parliamentarians are sitting together: We have seen critical situation, indeed, but both sides have (finally) and always been able to find compromises.

The composition of the CoPo's Bureau (*see below*) is a symbol to that: Under the Chairmen/women-ship of an MEP, an Israeli and a Palestinian serve as the CoPo's Vice-Presidents ....

In 2004 – as I have told you before – the EMPA had decided to set up three standing COMs (in parallel to the three strands, the three baskets of the B-P, the political, the economic and the cultural one) –

and two weeks ago at the 4<sup>th</sup> EMPA Plenary in Athens, it was decided to upgrade the 2005 created *ad hoc* COM on Women Affairs into a full standing

Committee. At the same time – and upon a proposal from the Egyptian side – a new *ad hoc* COM was set up, on environment & energy.

(Slide7 The EMPA standing Committees)

Committees meet up to four times a year – and are (traditionally) responsible for each two reports. The workplan / the reports issues are endorsed by the EMPA's Bureau. The COMs have to report back to Bureau (= enlarged B).

The Bureaus of the COMs consist of a Chair and three Vice-Presidents – always fifty-fifty N/S and following the criteria laid down for composition for the EMPA-Bureau ( North = 1 NP, 1 EP....)

The composition of the EMPA-Bureau reflects the N-S-equilibrium too. The 4Years-term is not renewable. In rotation and on an annual basis, the Assembly is chaired by one of the Bureau Members (all of them Presidents or Speakers of their respective Parliaments) – in N-S-alternation.

The Bureau represents the Assembly in its relations with other institutions and coordinates the work of the Assembly, in particular that of the COMs. It publishes declarations on important issues (e.g. recently on “Fitna”, or earlier on the autumn Alger

terror attack, etc.) and it has the power to authorize fact-finding missions (for example now of the CoPo to Gaza & Sderot) or joint COM meetings (such as the planned joint CoPo-CULT meeting scheduled for June, 2008).

Two weeks ago and for the 2<sup>nd</sup> four-years-term of the EMPA, the Athens Plenary decided on the composition of the new EMPA-Bureau as well as on its Presidencies and on the composition of the four standing Committees Bureau's.

*(Slide 9 The EMPA 2008-2012 Bureau and Presidencies)*

*(Slide 10 EMPA Committees new Bureau's)*

*(Slide 11 – The Members)*

The EMPA Committees shall consist of

- 70 Members ( CoPo, ECON, CULT), 35 S - 35 N ( 22 NP, 13 MEPs)
- 50 Members for the newly up-graded Womens Committee, 25 S – 25 N ( 16 NP, 9 MEPs)

The Members are:

- Appointed by their respective Parliaments participating in the B-P
- For a minimum period of one year

The EMPA is composed of two components and each participating parliament holds one delegation ( e.g; EU-NP = 3 .... EP = 49, S-NP = 13 Members strong.

(Slide 12 – Decision making)

Art 10, Rules

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It was my intention not to orientate my presentation on history. I was always trying to look to the future.

With the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in its 13<sup>th</sup> year within the Barcelona Process, things are moving. With the Union for the Mediterranean we can expect – at least – a Barcelona-Plus. And the EMPA ( and his newly elected President as well !!) is willing to fight to become the parliamentary body of “Barcelona re-enforced”.

President Pöttering’s priorities for 2008-2009 are not yet laid down. But we can assume, that

- the Peace process in the Middle East ( Annapolis-follow up) will be in the centre of the attempts of the EMPA to contribute to political dialogue in the region
- ( *the EP is already playing an important role – as **honest broker** – visible sign the recent creation of a highest-*

*political-level WG M-E & ad hoc EP delegation in the region ...)*

- Furthermore, the EMPA will focus on the *Dialogue between Cultures* (it is said that this issue will be on top of the agenda of a possible e.o. Plenary in autumn in the ME), then the Migration policy, Energy & environment etc.
- Institutional aspects will be important too. Under the EP's Chairmanship the EMPA will have to find ways of financing its activities – and will care about his future role as the parliamentary body of the forthcoming Union for the Mediterranean.

Thank you for your attention.

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Brussels