

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES

EUROMED SECRETARIAT

Political priorities for the EP Presidency of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (March 2005 – March 2006)

Brussels, 21 April 2005
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PE 351.004

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I. Political priorities

1. **Support action by EU institutions and increase the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) and the parliaments in the Middle East peace process** (*establish a working party within EMPA's Political Committee*) and **organise an extraordinary meeting of EMPA**, in whichever format best suits the occasion, in a symbolic city in the Middle East.
2. **Encourage the relaunch of the Barcelona Process** by suggesting to the other institutions (Ministerial Conference, Council of Ministers, European Commission) **innovative steps and actions** to be incorporated into **resolutions/recommendations** that EMPA will adopt before the extraordinary Ministerial Conference in Barcelona in November 2005.

Through its Committee on Foreign Affairs, the European Parliament will thus need to draft a report containing its proposals in response to the Commission's recent communication on the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona Process.

The European Parliament's delegation to EMPA should also contribute to these internal discussions by drawing up proposals and initiatives on the new phase of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

3. **Increase dialogue on human rights with the parliaments of the partner countries and with organisations and associations representing Euro-Mediterranean civil society** (trade unions, business associations, youth and women's groups, associations for the promotion and defence of human rights, universities and cultural associations).

The Euromed non-governmental platform held its first meeting in Luxembourg at the beginning of this month, bringing together 130 representatives of NGOs from around 30 Euro-Mediterranean countries.

In this context, it is essential that the bodies within EMPA and the European Parliament's delegation to EMPA regularly meet representatives of the relevant consultative institutions

(the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the Group of Euro-Mediterranean Cities) and of the different sections of civil society mentioned above.

4. Use the year-long Presidency to **promote EMPA as the parliamentary institution of the Barcelona Process** by backing initiatives from parliaments and Euro-Mediterranean civil society; **foster dialogue with the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Women Parliamentarians** and, **if appropriate, create an ad hoc parliamentary committee on women's rights**. In this context, an information campaign highlighting the achievements of the Barcelona Process could be launched, aimed at Members of Parliament and civil servants in the partner countries.
5. Set up **practical initiatives which have added value and are effective and visible to the Euro-Mediterranean public**, for example in the field of civil protection (*establish a working party on the prevention of natural and ecological disasters*).
6. Improve knowledge and raise awareness among Members and staff of the European Parliament with regard to **cultural reality** in the partner countries by **organising a 'Mediterranean Week'**, to take place in March 2006 simultaneously in the European Parliament's buildings in Brussels and at the EMPA plenary during which the European Parliament's Presidency of EMPA will draw to a close. The embassies of the partner countries in Brussels and, if possible, the Commission could help organise the event.

Launch **Euro-Mediterranean youth initiatives** to help increase young people's knowledge of and mutual respect for all cultures and religions in the region and help them learn about the democratic process.

II. Institutional priorities

Pursue the process of **shoring up the institutional framework** of EMPA and its bodies by:

1. Enhancing the **transparency and effectiveness of the working methods of parliamentary committees and plenary sittings**, as well as the practical understanding of these elements among members and staff of the two other component parts of EMPA. In this context it is essential to:
 - improve the rules governing **decision-making** by amending the relevant provisions in the Rules of Procedure (*establish a working party*);
 - **make progress with regard to bringing EMPA's bodies and permanent multinational secretariat together as a network**, and, in the meantime, improve the way in which the current secretariat is run;
 - improve **communication between EMPA's bodies** (Presidency, Bureau, committees) and its members through a continual exchange of information;
 - consider the **practical arrangements for financing** EMPA in the next stage of its development within the working party established to amend the Rules of Procedure.
2. **Stepping up the regular contact between the two European arms of EMPA** (the European Parliament and the EU national parliaments) by organising joint meetings to agree on joint opinions and initiatives.
3. Establishing **practical arrangements for institutional cooperation between EMPA and the executive bodies involved in the Barcelona Process** (the Ministerial Conference, the Senior Officials Committee and the Euromed Committee).
4. **Arranging for EMPA's involvement in the bodies within the Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures and Civilisations.**

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