

## **TRESMED3 SEMINAR HELD IN THE CITY OF AMMAN, JORDAN**

**30 JUNE AND 1 JULY 2009**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Seminar brought together representatives of the Economic and Social Councils of Spain, France, Italy, Lebanon and the European Economic and Social Committee; economic and social agents from Egypt, Jordan; the Commission of the European Union; the Platform of European Social NGOs; the European Foundation for Training based in Turin; the Alexandria Library; the Real Instituto Elcano; the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija; and leading experts from the fields of academia and research.

The aim of the Seminar was to identify the social and civil agents and to establish a mutual exchange of experiences and skills in relation to the institutionalized social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Region (European Union – Mashreq).

The meeting analysed the roles and capacities of civil society organizations and regional cooperation and intercultural dialogue.

It also addressed the issue of active policies for groups at risk of exclusion, the long-term unemployed, women, young people, the elderly and dependents. The search for solutions based on the practice of good governance, transparency and the establishment of stable and effective institutions, education and vocational training.

The European coordination strategy for economic, employment and social policies was also analysed.

The aforementioned issues were addressed with the aim of acquiring knowledge on the different realities on both sides of the Mediterranean

One of the aims of the TRESMED Project - on which the meeting sought to achieve further progress - is contributing to the involvement and empowerment of the social interlocutors and organizations in the processes of participation and in the construction of an institutionalized social dialogue.

In order for the ESCs to be useful institutions, the civil society organizations must have the necessary support and resources. Key to this process is their autonomy and their ability to produce reports on socio-economic subjects related to the well-being of people.

All interventions took account of the present economic crisis and its negative consequences for the region and its peoples, in terms of unemployment and a possible contraction of social policies.

## **KEY CONCLUSIONS**

### **The Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions:**

The ESCs should be useful instruments in designing analyses and proposals to deal with economic, social and employment problems affecting their societies.

In times such as the current period, which is marked by a serious world financial and economic crisis on a global level causing a wide range of negative effects – particularly on employment - the ESCs featuring representation from civil society organizations must ensure a commitment to convert the promise of democratic participation into a reality. To do so, they should promote initiatives which contribute to the application of measures focusing on overcoming this serious situation, whilst ensuring that their proposals comply with the need for a social dimension.

Democracy cannot be restricted to exercising the right to vote every four years. Institutionalized social dialogue is an example of participation both in terms of the drawing up of opinions and proposals on consultations posited by the public authorities, and as an exercise of ongoing dialogue in order to achieve consensus on said proposals.

The ESCs in the Mashreq Region, alongside those of the European Union, can play a very significant role in the fight against corruption, in designing laws of a social nature, in combating abuse in society, and in the provision of advice to the national parliamentarians who develop laws on issues where expert opinion is required.

The Union for the Mediterranean is committed to achieving closer ties between the member states of the European Union and the countries included in the European Neighbourhood Policy.

## **Civil society and regional cooperation: roles and empowerment.**

The role played by the civil society organizations, and their empowerment, is key to the function they undertake in terms of representing and reconciling the differing yet legitimate interests existing in our societies.

The economic and social agents, along with the civil society organizations as a whole, have to sign up to participatory democracy and establish their own momentum so as to achieve the recognition and empowerment needed to exert influence on the public authorities responsible for decision-making on policies and government.

It is necessary to establish links of cooperation between the ESCs and organized civil society in the Mashreq countries, in order to work towards the creation of a culture of peace, progress and participation, and to increase social and economic development.

Exchanging good practices and experiences decisively contributes to mutual understanding and to linking wills and cultures, and thereby to breaking down cultural barriers.

## **Intercultural Dialogue**

Intercultural dialogue should serve to build bridges between our peoples. It should be based on mutual recognition of identities, cultures and religions, reconciliation of universal values with the existing diversity of cultures, and the adoption of actions to eliminate discrimination against individuals and groups, and should thereby contribute to reducing social and economic inequalities.

## **Active Employment Policies for Groups at Risk of Exclusion**

Equal rights for women will only become a reality when they have equal access to and equal representation in political, social and economic life.

A change is needed at schools, training centres and universities so as to focus more on inter-culturality, paradigm changes, and establishment of criteria for equality and quality in provision of training.

Public policies must be effective and efficient in order to generate quality employment and meet the work needs of the weakest sections of the population: women, young people and migrants.

Public policies have to drive forward a competitive productive system and ensure that training provision covers labour market requirements and is in accordance with individuals' professional aspirations. This should be achieved via accessible pathways for entering the labour market and ongoing training for remaining in it, both at the outset of a person's working life and throughout his or her career.

To achieve this, it will be important to stimulate young people's desire for knowledge so as to progressively reduce school dropout rates until they reach zero, and to establish an educational system which meets the needs of the productive system.

Education and vocational training of people are the best ways to develop societies.

### **The Search for Solutions**

**Greater participation:** There should be wide-ranging participation because citizens are not only the beneficiaries of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) but also the actors in the Euro-Mediterranean process. At the end of the day, the success of the UfM initiative will depend on citizens, civil society and the active participation of the private sector.

In this sense, it is proposed that at the forthcoming Euromed ESCs Summit the EESC hold a session on the role of young people in the process to build the social dialogue.

**More education and more knowledge:** Ongoing training is the cornerstone of the vocational training strategy since it is an instrument which is crucial to active employment policies.

We should prioritise our work in areas of greatest instability and vulnerability, whilst ensuring we continue in those that have exhibited greater strength.

Knowledge is key in the search for solutions and will be the linchpin of a new type of co-development based on new ways of competing in a sustainable knowledge society.

**Establishment of relationships of cooperation:** Offers were also made at the meeting to promote bilateral relationships between countries (Spain and Italy), and between organizations from different countries (consumers' associations).

These actions are key to strengthening the links between organizations from the north and south of the Mediterranean via joint actions in the areas of common interest. These amount to the salient everyday challenges to be met in resolving issues of importance to the immediate future within a context of mutual respect and social cohesion.

Joint work between the already constituted ESCs, those currently being constituted, and the remaining stakeholders and agents participating in the type of social dialogue we require should be based on a methodology featuring creative interaction, the construction of mutual trust, partnership, and the creation of cross-cutting coalitions of interests.

**The participation of women:** Promotion of women's participation must be a priority objective, to be achieved by means of their empowerment at different levels of life. Measures should include promotion of the participation of women in the delegations of ESCs.

By writing in the presence of women in its ESC's founding statutes Jordan has taken a significant step forward.

**A new model:** A paradigm change and a new vision are required and ESCs can assume the role of mediators in the same, bringing to bear the transversality essential for addressing the multiplicity of needs and challenges displayed by the region in the most effective way.

The ESCs are showing that they have the capacity to generate hope so as to strengthen environments that are really conducive to a social dialogue. Achieving this will drive forward the emancipation and empowerment of the region's social agents and civil societies.

**Bridges to consolidate the Euro-Mediterranean social dialogue.** Lastly, the seminar bore witness to the positive expectations which currently prevail in the Mashreq region and in the rest of the represented Euro-Mediterranean countries in regard to intensifying the bridge-building process to improve the social dialogue in the region.

Participants felt that the meeting had served as the point of departure and that in order to achieve the objective proposed in the present conclusions it would be vital to drive forward the dialogue begun in Amman. This should be done by using the most appropriate formulae for the maintenance of a partnership which is ongoing, creative, mutually respectful and adapted to the aforementioned tasks and challenges.

## **PROPOSALS**

To propose to the European Economic and Social Committee that the forthcoming Euromed Summit of ESCs and Institutions (Alexandria, October 2009) should include a working session on young people and their role in the construction of the social dialogue now and in the future.

To create a small group of experts (to be jointly steered by an ESC from the Mashreq and a European Union ESC or the EESC), nominated by the ESCs and similar institutions to produce a synopsis on the "Idea of the Mediterranean". This would be a scientific document on our understanding of who we are, what we might become, on our affinities and our diversity, and on our reality and attendant clichés.

To strengthen relationships of a bilateral and multi-lateral nature and those under the European Union umbrella, so as to drive forward collaboration and technical assistance between the ESCs and similar institutions on both sides of

the Mediterranean. To this end, it might be possible to harness the support of organizations and foundations dedicated to fomenting relationships between Europe and the Arab countries, focusing on scientific contents and media dissemination of good practice.

To nominate a representative from the Mashreq Region to join the TRESMED Project 3 steering committee, which involves the ESCs of Spain, Italy, France and Algeria. Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon will jointly select said nominee on a consensus basis.

It is the aim of this Committee to keep the Project alive during the whole of the time in is in force and to prepare a Final Conference to take place towards the end of the first half of 2010.

To reinforce a working network to establish contact between the consumer associations. To this end, a point of reference might be an instrument developed by the TRESMED Project 3 called “the navigator for the institutional social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region”.  
It is attached as an annex.

#### **FINAL WORD OF THANKS**

Finally, the Spanish ESC would like to take this opportunity to expressly thank Jordan’s Ministry of Employment for its hospitality, assistance, and active collaboration. The Spanish ESC would also like to make special mention of the presence of all representatives of organizations, experts and professionals, all of whom made this event possible within the framework of the TRESMED Project 3.

Amman, 1 July 2009.