

## **EuroMeSCo General Assembly 2014**

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

October 2013 - October 2014

From October 2013 to October 2014, the EuroMeSCo Academic Secretariat has focused on the implementation of the Work Plan 2014, following the agreements of the last General Assembly, held in Paris on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013.

The Academic Secretariat has developed and coordinated numerous research activities, including the research project “The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective”, developed jointly with the Strategic Studies Network (SSN). New EuroMeSCo Papers, Briefs and Reports have been issued. Additionally, the Academic Secretariat has undertaken a series of activities in order to enhance the visibility of the EuroMeSCo network, regularly updating the EuroMeSCo website and producing the monthly newsletter.

As a result of its progress over the last few years and its strengthened research activities, the EuroMeSCo network was ranked as the seventh best network of think tanks in the world in the University of Pennsylvania’s 2013 “Global Go-To Think Tanks Ranking”.

### **MAIN ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. Research Programme: The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective**

In line with the decision taken at the General Assembly 2012 to launch a research programme focusing on comparative perspectives of the political transformation processes unleashed by the Arab uprisings, in February 2014 the kick-off meeting of the Working Group “The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective” took place in Bangkok. The Working Group brings together the researchers from the Strategic Studies Network and EuroMeSCo and is coordinated by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed).

The aim of the research project is to produce a joint, policy-oriented volume on comparative perspectives of the transitions in the Arab world. In the current phase of the project, most drafts of the research papers have been submitted to the coordinator of the Working Group. The submission of the final version of the papers is expected for January 2015, and the publication of the edited volume is scheduled for February 2015. The final results of this research programme will be presented at the Annual Conference of the SSN in February 2015.

The Working Group is structured around two main blocks: “Internal changes in transition processes: What priorities?” and “External actors and regional integration”. It consists of 5

working packages, each of them led by two EuroMeSCo researchers. The topics explored are:

1. Internal changes in transition processes: What priorities?

1.1. State Building Processes and Reforms and Security Sector Reform

The aim of this working package is to analyse the process of democratic reform in the Arab Spring countries. The analysis focuses on the institution building and constitutional reform processes, the transformation of the public space and the security sector reform. The researchers draw comparisons with the previous experiences in democratic transitions in other countries, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

1.2. The role of religion in transitional processes

This working package aims to analyse the factors that make religion an important element in the democratisation processes. The researchers focus on the role of religion in different Arab Spring countries, the inclusion of religious groups in the political arena and the emergence of the new actors, including the Salafists.

1.3. Socio-economic reforms in transitional processes

This working package analyses the socio-economic factors that led to the outbreak of the Arab Spring, including food security, social security, taxation policies and subsidies. The researchers also examine the reforms undertaken after the Arab Spring, analysing the elements that delay the improvement of the well-being of Arab societies.

2. External actors and regional integration

2.1. The role of the European Union in supporting democratic transitions in the Southern Mediterranean

The research under this working package is structured around three main issues: lessons learned from the ENP, assessment of interests, leverage and objectives of the EU and instruments and tools of the EU's action. The group aims to provide policy recommendations on the reformulation of the EU's policies in order to make them more coherent, efficient and inclusive.

2.2. Regional integration

This working package focuses on the role of the EU as a promoter of economic integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The researchers analyse the EU's policies and tools developed to support economic reform in the Arab countries. Additional focus is placed on other structures for regional cooperation, including the UfM, 5+5 and the EU-Arab League dialogue.

## 2. Publications

In line with the Work Plan for 2014, three Papers, a Brief and two Reports have been published throughout this year.

### EuroMeSCo Papers

The last papers published by EuroMeSCo are:

- EuroMeSCo Paper 22: *Winning to Lose: The State's Unsustainable Counterrevolutionary Comeback in Egypt*. Ibrahim El Houdaiby, PhD candidate at Columbia University, Research Fellow at FRIDE and Research Associate at DGAP (September 2014).

Ibrahim El Houdaiby analyses the challenges posed to the Egyptian modern state from its emergence until today. None of the revolutionary waves before 2011 were able to dismantle the fundamental features of elitism, authoritarian guardianship and violence dominating the Egyptian political scene. The 2011 revolution brought the opportunity to challenge the state's model of governance but three years later many argue that the Egyptian state has succeeded in absorbing the revolutionary shocks and has ensured a successful comeback. However, according to the author, deeper scrutiny suggests that the recent developments have resulted in political stagnation, deterioration of the economic situation and bureaucratic failures. El Houdaiby concludes that, in order to secure the survival of the Egyptian state, the new regime needs to embark on a profound reform process, which will alter the very foundations of the current political regime.
- EuroMeSCo Paper 21: *Société civile au Maroc. Le grand malentendu*. Mohamed El Hachimi, Researcher at the Centre des Études et de Recherches en Sciences Sociales (June 2014).

In this paper Mohamed El Hachimi examines the nature of Moroccan association movements and evaluates their contribution to the democratisation of the political system of the country. According to the author, the associative movement in Morocco is not able to play a key role in democratisation given its high degree of atomisation and depolitisation. The emergence of new extra-institutional social movements such as the 20th February movement can be seen as an attempt to overcome the deficit of powerful civil society structures. However, the author highlights that the literature on civil society movements has tended to overestimate the role of these organisations when confronted with the institutional mechanisms of state apparatuses.
- EuroMeSCo Paper 20: *Demands of the Egyptian Revolution and the Newly-Emerging Actors*, Mohamed El-Agati, Researcher and Director of the Arab Forum for Alternatives (February 2014).

In this paper, Mohamed El-Agati discusses the most popular demands that led to the outbreak of the Revolution in Egypt, which can be summarized under the claim for bread, freedom, social justice and dignity. The paper also presents the main actors of the Egyptian political arena during the Revolution and those who are currently heading the political scene. It analyses the commitment of the political actors to the implementation of the revolutionary demands and observes that although these actors first expressed a strong desire to support the necessary reforms, they have gradually abandoned the most popular issues.

The Academic Secretariat is also involved in the review and editing process of other EuroMeSCo papers presented at the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference 2013, jointly organised with the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), "A Transforming Arab World: Between Continuity and Change".

## **EuroMeSCo Briefs**

EuroMeSCo has recently published the following brief:

- Brief 54: “What Are the Prospects for Success of the Peace Talks on Syria?” Tiziana Trotta (January 2014).

## **EuroMeSCo Reports**

Two new reports are available on the EuroMeSCo website:

- EuroMeSCo-IEMed (Report No.6): A Transforming Arab World: Between Continuity and Change. Report of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference, jointly organised with the European Union Institute for Security Studies, 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 2013.
- Report of the Kick Off Meeting of the Working Group “The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective” of the Strategic Studies Network, held in Bangkok on 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

## **3. Workshops and Conferences**

In line with the 2014 Work Plan, the EuroMeSCo Academic Secretariat has contributed to the organisation of conferences and workshops led by institutes of the network. Before the end of 2014, the following workshop will be organised:

- “Oppositions and Transitions in the Arab World Post 2011”. Organised by the IEMed in cooperation with the EuroMeSCo members Centre d Etudes et de Recherche en Science Sociales (CERSS) and Arab Reform Initiative, together with the Ibn Zohr University, Centre Jacques Berque and the Hanns Seidel Stiftung, the conference will be held on 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> November in Agadir (Morocco).

## **4. Steering Committee Meeting**

The EuroMeSCo Steering Committee held a meeting in Barcelona on 6th February 2014. The members of the Steering Committee highlighted the inclusion of EuroMeSCo as the 7th best think tank network in the world according to the University of Pennsylvania’s 2013 “Global Go-To Think Tanks Ranking”. The Steering Committee referred to the research project “The Arab Spring in Comparative Perspective” and to the Working Group that started its proceedings on the occasion of the Annual Meeting of the Strategic Studies Network (SSN).

The IEMed informed the Steering Committee that it would maintain its commitment to the progress of the network and that it would continue to finance its programmes. It also made reference to the launch of the Call for Proposals of the European Commission. Finally, a reference was made to the organisation of the EuroMeSCo Annual Conference 2014, followed by a discussion of the topics of the conference and its working sessions.

## 5. Enhancing the visibility of the network

In line with the guidelines of the Work Plan for 2014, EuroMeSCo Academic Secretariat has strengthened its efforts to enhance the visibility of the EuroMeSCo activities and to promote the recognition of the network as a discussion forum on political and security developments in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Throughout the year, the EuroMeSCo website has been regularly updated with the information of the network's and its member's activities, including conferences, workshops, research programmes and new publications. The EuroMeSCo publications have also been presented on various events organised by the IEMed.

Additionally, the Academic Secretariat has issued the monthly newsletter of the network, compiling the most relevant publications and events of the network and the EuroMeSCo institutes. Since last year, the number of recipients of the newsletter has significantly increased and currently includes over 2,000 people, among them experts, academics, policy-makers, civil society representatives and other relevant stakeholders. The publication of the newsletter and the activities of the network are also announced on social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter.

## 6. Funding

Throughout the year, the EuroMeSCo Academic Secretariat has pursued an active fundraising strategy with relevant national and European bodies. The Academic Secretariat submitted a research proposal to the Volkswagen Foundation in the framework of the call "State, Society and Economy in Change - Multilateral Cooperative Research Projects on the Arab World" and the tender of the European Parliament "Research Network to Provide Foreign Policy Expertise". Unfortunately, both proposals were considered not to fulfil the requirements of the donors. The Academic Secretariat has since redoubled its efforts to identify relevant calls for proposals to fund the activities of the network.

Recently, the EuroMeSCo Academic Secretariat has submitted a proposal to the European Commission Call "Support to dialogues, political and economic research and studies of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership" with reference EuropeAid/135-333/C/ACT/MULTI, under Lot 1 "Support to political research, studies and dialogue of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership". The general objective of the Call for Proposals is to enhance and strengthen the cooperation of think tanks and research institutes from both shores of the Mediterranean, in particular. The proposal submitted aims to promote joint research studies and dialogues on the key trends and challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean region, thus increasing their capacities and influence in the policy-making processes.