



E.MALumni Association General Assembly

Location: Centre Albert Borschette - Rue Froissart, 36 – Room AB0A - Brussels

Date 21 May 2010

Chair: Corinna Greco (Vice-President *ad interim*)

Secretaries: Michaël Merrigan and Sophie Mirgaux

Participants: Around 80 E.MALumni

2:30 pm. Ms Greco welcomed the guests and thanked the EIUC and the European Commission for their input and support. The agenda was adopted without amendment.

Introduction on Rules and Tools

Cristiano Gianolla (EIUC Networking Officer and E.MALumnus 07/08) works as a coordinator and is concerned to revitalize the Association. He reported on his experience and what he has learned after six months of work. He has contacted and engaged in dialogue with several actors and organizations, including other Alumni Associations (such as ACIPS from Sarajevo) and fellows E.MALumni. He pointed out that enthusiasm for the Association among fellow E.MALumni and the will to be concrete with regard to the common objective of addressing human rights issues, are prevalent. Mr. Gianolla highlighted the need for caution with regard to expenditures and encouraged the General Assembly to discuss activities to be undertaken and the procedures to be followed. He also provided a list of possible objectives for the Association.

The most urgent and important objective should be strengthening the E.MALumni network and interaction, for example, by encouraging others to register on the Website (www.emalumniassociation.org, herein "Website"), and to complete their profiles and posting (jobs, ideas, opinions) on the Website. Other objectives proposed included: fostering the visibility of the Association; improving the capacity of graduates to find professional positions and enhance their expertise and capacities (including job, internships, research and PhD opportunities); promoting the contribution of E.MALumni to public debates on Human Rights issues – the association could become a central forum (focal point) in this regard; promoting initiatives and ideas originating with individual E.MALumni or groups of alumni; organising projects such as seminars, workshops, conferences, cultural events or cooperative actions; providing working tools and facilities to E.MALumni (some of which are already available on the Website, i.e., link exchange, profile search, mission board); promoting sustainability and fundraising; gathering statistics about professional careers of the E.MALumni (function implemented on the Website); lobbying NGO's, IGO's and governments; raising public awareness; becoming an implementing NGO for research and projects; producing relevant press releases; granting E.MALumni access to EIUC research facilities (namely the library); creating city/regional clubs for E.MALumni to gather for professional and social interests; strengthening the partnership with EIUC for the benefit of both organisations (EIUC could outsource to E.MALumni, E.MALumni could provide professional support to EIUC); documenting E.MALumni activities (pictures, documentaries, reports); establishing an Alumnus/a of the year for professional merit; setting up a database of theses; suggesting topics for theses or researches to E.MA students and supporting them during their research time (second semester); creating subgroups for regional or thematic interests; granting scholarships to recent graduates to allow them to access unpaid internships; cooperating with other organisations and Alumni networks.

Mr. Gianolla illustrated the importance of remote working. Since the Association's members are spread all over the world, remote cooperation and the Website are fundamental. Remote

cooperation and working allow: the inclusion of everybody from wherever in the world; the avoidance of needless expenses for travel and accommodation; the facilitation of more efficient decision-making processes and implementation of decisions taken; the promotion of wider participation in the General Assembly and Board and, thereby, a deepening and broadening of perspectives. 'Remote' does not mean that the Association's members cannot meet in person but it does provide for alternative channels when such meetings are not possible. The first priority is for the E.MAAlumni to subscribe and complete their profile, then to engage in the exchange of information; discussions and online voting should take place. Concerning the staff, the association can decide whether it will be based on volunteer work, or on full time or part-time staff. In all the cases a remote team (everybody works from home) would allow the widest possible dynamic with *ad hoc* people/groups appointed whenever specific task needs to be undertaken. Remote working therefore concerns 2 points: 1. making it possible for the General Assembly and Board to discuss and decide online, 2. making it possible for the staff to work 'virtually' from different parts of the world.

Mr. Gianolla concluded his presentation with a list of concrete steps that he regards as necessary: the amendment of the statute, so that the link with EIUC is clear and remote working is made possible; the election of a President and a Board (remotely: the campaign should last until the 15th of June, and voting should take place from the 16th until the 30th of June); the creation, by the President and the Board, of a standing order, and the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly; the candidates must ensure and guarantee continuity and commitment; the network needs to be strengthened internally (E.MAAlumni need to be contacted); the added value of our association needs to be identified (Why are we special? Our strengths include the fact that we are spread throughout the world and that we represent a wide variety of cultural and professional backgrounds); the Board and President need to have a plan of action; the realisation of the first project before the end of spring 2011; the fostering of the visibility of the Association; the adoption of a green policy (no printing of posters and flyers which aren't read); thought must be given to the legal status of the Association (not recognized as an NGO yet); there must be a low cost approach with regards to expenses (no tourism through our Association); the Association must ensure that new graduates are actively recruited each year to guarantee its continual regeneration.

Role and Objectives of the E.MAAlumni Association

Ms. Greco opened the debate which was animated and which was characterised by the active participation of the E.MAAlumni present in the hall. The most important points discussed were:

- The first objective should be for the Association to recruit as many members as possible now that it has momentum. E.MAAlumni who are not present in the GA should be especially encouraged to participate. The Website should become the most important tool for the Association. As many people as possible should be active on the Website. It would be a mistake to start too many activities at the same time; it is better to focus on a few simple objectives at first.
- The Association needs to go beyond networking. There is a need for good organization and a clear focus for all the info and all the ideas. Moreover the issue of sustainability should be addressed.
- It should be the task of the board to maintain momentum, to find a balance between spamming and activating people. The first board and president should be committed, proactive and have

concrete targets. They should make evident to E.MAlumni why it is an added value for everyone to complete their profile, and contribute to the discussions, decision-making and papers via the Website. Other tasks could include publicity to external persons and organisations and a strategy for actively engaging them.

- A lengthy discussion was held on whether the GA should deliberate on other objectives apart from networking. A portion of the audience proposed that, within the first year, the new board and president should implement at least one project related to human rights and democratisation. Another group proposed suggesting a small number of areas with regard to which the board could then decide to implement a project. This idea was opposed by those who believe that it should be up to the board to decide on the merit of projects to be implemented in the context of human rights.

Change of Agenda - Presentation of, and Voting on, the Amendments to the Statute

In view of the desire of those present to discuss, and vote on, the amendments to the Statute before proceeding with the remainder of the agenda, the Assembly decided to attend to this point before completing the original agenda.

The Assembly agreed to vote on all amendments at once, as proposed by Mr. Gianolla. Before the voting took place, there was a lengthy discussion regarding two additional amendments:

- a. Change Art. 13.4 “The General Assembly's main tasks are to:” point “.l” to “approve proposed changes to the present Statute by a vote of at least one third (1/3) of the active members and the favourable vote of the simple majority of those voting members;”
- b. Add to the sixth paragraph of the Preamble “Stressing, in this regard, the importance of networking and cooperation,” the sentence “and to promote human rights and democracy in Europe and throughout the world,”

The Assembly proceeded with the voting.

- **VOTE 1:** Shall the new amendments “a.” be introduced into the list of amendments to the E.MAlumni Statute? The General Assembly approved this proposal unanimously (0 votes against, and 0 abstentions).
- **VOTE 2:** Shall the new amendments “b.” be introduced in the list of amendments to the E.MAlumni Statute? The General Assembly approved this proposal unanimously (0 votes against, and 0 abstentions).
- **VOTE 3:** Shall all the proposed amendments to the statute (including the amendments proposed by Mr. Gianolla and the two added today) be approved? The General Assembly approved this proposal (0 votes against, and 0 abstentions).

Structure and Procedures of the E.MAlumni Association

- A discussion occurred on whether the GA should vote for the President and Board on the spot or online. Only active members should be allowed to vote but at the moment there is no distinction between active and normal members (because a membership fee has not yet been established).

There was a consensus that, for the election of the first president and board, all E.MAAlumni have the right to vote. There was a consensus on voting online to also allow people not present in Brussels to participate in the campaign and the voting.

- Mr. Gianolla responded to questions about the Website as follows: to allow people to participate, and follow up on the topics of their interest, without being expected to visit the Website every day, the Website has been designed to be connected with the most important social networks, including Facebook; moreover a RSS feed and email update will facilitate the information flow from the Website. The access to the Website is open to everyone, but only E.MAAlumni have full privileges; guest users can only read, and guest registered users can read and contribute to the forum "Discussions – Human Rights and Democracy". Each user can decide which part of his/her profile to show to E.MAAlumni and other registered users; each profile section has a privacy choice.

The Assembly proceeded with voting.

- **VOTE 4:** Shall all the elections and voting online take place in the following way: 15 days campaign period, followed by a 15 days election/voting period (for every future decision, with the exception of the current election of the Board and the President, whose campaign period has already begun)? The General Assembly approved this proposal (0 votes against, and 0 abstentions).
- **VOTE 5:** Shall the first board be entrusted with two main objectives? 1. Network and strengthen the cooperation of E.MAAlumni, in particular through the use of the Association's Website 2. Organize at least one other substantial activity in the area of human rights within one year? The General Assembly approves (1 vote against, and 5 abstentions).

Membership, Funding and Sustainability of the E.MAAlumni Association

The discussion about the membership fees is left to the Board, as specified in the Statute, but some members proposed that the membership fee should be waived in the first year following graduation.

There was a request for more information regarding the budget. Where will the Association get the funds? Will there be a continued funding by the EIUC? How much money has the EIUC spent for E.MAAlumni? Prof. Florence Benoît-Rohmer (EIUC Secretary General) intervened to clarify that she would propose to the EIUC Board future support for E.MAAlumni and that she thought that EIUC should be able to support E.MAAlumni for 1 year, or perhaps 2 years, since the political will exists to strengthen E.MAAlumni. She foresaw the possibility that that EIUC might cover the expenses related to the position of the EIUC Networking Officer who would work 50% of his time for the E.MAAlumni Association and a project/activity. She stresses that EIUC needs to deliberate about this decision. Prof. Benoît-Rohmer underlined that EIUC's contract with the European Commission will expire in year 2013 when a new contract will be discussed, but that it is also possible that EIUC will be left without funding from the European Commission.

Ms. Greco closed the General Assembly meeting at 6.36 PM by thanking all E.MAAlumni for attending and actively contributing to the debates. She also thanked Prof. Benoit-Rohmer from EIUC and Ms Bocchi from the European Commission for their continuous attention during the entire meeting.