

Foreword

The Mediterranean Yearbook, Ten Years of Reflexion

Senén Florensa

Executive President
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

Andreu Bassols

Director General
European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed),
Barcelona

The first edition of the *Mediterranean Yearbook* was published ten years ago with the intention of offering a plural, diverse and extensive vision of the reality of the Mediterranean area. In our humble opinion, we have accomplished this mission, offering our readers a quality product. Despite being witness to numerous events and transformations over the last decade, most of us would never have imagined the current situation.

The Mediterranean has never been a geopolitically backwater. While its conflicts are high on the international agenda (the Arab-Israeli conflict, the situation in Cyprus, the Balkans, international terrorism), it has also been marked by what seemed to be unalterable features: the immutability of the Arab regimes or the economic growth of the northern shore as a result of European integration; as well as the enormous and growing gap between the economic and social conditions prevailing north and south of our sea.

However, the apparent stability, which concealed the germs of growing imbalances, has disappeared in recent years. On the one hand, the serious economic crisis has broken the economies of southern Europe, forcing a European bailout of Portugal, Cyprus and Greece. On the other, the regimes in the southern

Mediterranean have experienced major transformations; the so-called “Arab Spring” marked the beginning of a series of political transitions with uncertain futures. After the turmoil of the revolutions, these countries’ transitions have followed extremely different paths: from the relatively smooth developments in Morocco and Jordan, to those countries suffering the effects of high speed changes, like Egypt and Tunisia, and the armed conflicts of Libya and Syria. The brutal and bloody war in Syria and the crisis of the democratic experience in Egypt are testimony to the gravity of the current moment.

In the short term, developments in these countries is uncertain, as illustrated by events in Egypt with the fall of President Morsi and the, hopefully transitory, implosion of the newly born democratic system. However, in the long run, it is clear that history is following its course and that, despite the steps taken backwards, the democratising wave of modernity will not leave the Arab world out in the cold. This historic process of democratisation codified its value system in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, reaching various country groups in the subsequent decades. These democratic transitions transformed certain countries of the northern Mediterranean in the seventies; Latin America in the eighties; and, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, transformed the political, economic and social landscape of Central and Eastern Europe in the nineties and 2000s. Not to mention other significant advances in Asia and Africa, the most praiseworthy and emblematic example being that led by Nelson Mandela in South Africa. After the self-immolation of the young Bouazizi in Tunisia at the end of 2010, this citizens’ awakening spread to the entire Arab world. The path these countries have taken may be a long one and in some cases there will still be much suffering. How-

ever there is no doubt in the history's direction and the Arab world will be no exception.

The *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook*, with its dedication to following the situation of the Mediterranean area, could not leave these events aside. The "post-Spring" situation is, therefore, the focal point of the themes dealt with throughout and especially in the section *Keys*, which contains the most relevant events. In keeping with the tradition of the Yearbook the subject is dealt with from different perspectives. A series of articles looks at the dramatic situation in Syria; while another analyses the transitions in Arab countries, both inside the countries themselves and regarding their effects on the regional order. Another subsection of *Keys* is focused on the role of the media and the new forms of communication in these processes. Lastly, this section containing the most important themes is completed with a series of articles on Euro-Mediterranean relations in the current context, that is to say, both faced with the transitions of the southern Mediterranean countries and the serious economic crisis sweeping through Europe, especially in the Mediterranean countries.

This tenth edition of the Yearbook presents certain new elements; a renewal of some of its content, without losing its identity and defining features. Thus, while maintaining its main sections, certain changes have been introduced. The *Dossier* section, for example, is no longer a series of articles but rather a single extensive work which looks in detail at a single theme. This time it was decided to use the Dossier to closely follow the political transitions in the Arab countries. Produced by the IEMed's Arab and Mediterranean World Department, this Dossier offers an analysis of the main actors (political or otherwise) that have been central to the transitions of many of these Mediterranean Arab countries and looks not just at the role of the politicians, but also that of youth, women and the media.

Another change in the Yearbook is the distribution of the articles in the *Panorama* section into two large subsections. One contains the articles most focused

on the development of Mediterranean countries and regional actors, and the other contains transversal articles in which the focus is on a theme, such as security, the economy, population, culture or society. There is also a series of *Country Profiles* that summarises the main statistics of each country and complements the traditional section *The Mediterranean in Brief*, providing statistical data which is more complete and direct than before.

Despite the modifications, the Yearbook maintains its identity as a pluralist and transversal product with over 50 authors of diverse origins and perspectives, offering information and a comprehensive analysis of the situation in the Mediterranean area.

We would like to finish this foreword by giving our thanks to all those who have made these ten editions of the Yearbook possible, starting with the CIDOB Foundation, whose collaboration in the first seven editions was key to starting the Project. We would also like to thank the more than 500 authors, who have poured their knowledge into the articles and contributed to the Yearbook's becoming a work of reference. Thanks to them and the positive response of the professional and specialised public, the Yearbook has become an annual meeting point and reference material in all Ministries, chancelleries, international organisations or research centres or universities of the 43 countries that today make up the Union for the Mediterranean. Also we would, of course, like to thank the different members of the IEMed who have participated in the successive editions of the Yearbook: directors, coordinators, editors, collaborators, interns; as well as the translators, correctors, designers, layout designers, printers and administrative staff. All of these people, through their efforts and work, have made the more than 4,500 pages of the *Mediterranean Yearbook* possible. We rely on them to continue to fulfil our goal to bring our readers ever closer to the Euro-Mediterranean reality. Lastly, to our readers, who inspire us to seek excellence in every edition, we offer our most sincere thanks.