

Foreword

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Today, the Mediterranean is undoubtedly the focus of the international community. The Arab transitions, conflict in Syria, economic crisis and future of Europe, as well as other issues, have clearly marked the current international panorama. This, however, has merely served to increase the volume and complexity of the information we have on this part of our planet. For nine editions, the IEMed has tackled this complexity with the *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook. Med.2012*, a tool which enables its readers to better understand the workings of this changing region. With this publication, the IEMed offers a compendium of information and analysis which is essential to understanding the changing reality of a strategic region for Europe and the world.

This edition of the Yearbook comprises over 55 articles by actors, experts, academics and journalists from both shores of the Mediterranean, chronologies that outline the major events and a compilation of statistics on the key socio-economic indicators of Euro-Mediterranean countries. A selection of maps that are essential for clarifying the positions of each country completes the publication.

The articles contained in the Yearbook are arranged into three main sections. *Keys* deals with the major issues; those considered essential for understanding what is at stake in the region. The *Dossier* pre-

sents a collection of articles that look in detail at a single, relevant theme from an array of different standpoints. The section this year looks at the awakening of civil society in the Mediterranean. Finally *Panorama* reviews the current Euro-Mediterranean situation through a range of subjects such as security, economic relations or conflict in the Middle East. In this, the ninth edition, the Yearbook's section on major issues (*Keys*) inevitably begins with articles dedicated to the Arab transitions. The effervescence of revolution has given way to the long and complicated path of transition towards stable and free democracies, which is why, as well as including more general articles, this section also focuses separately on the paradigmatic cases of Tunisia and Egypt. Furthermore, it analyses the role of political Islam in these transitions, which has proved itself to be not only a key actor, but also an extremely diverse one. Although these articles offer a thorough political analysis of the transitions, it is evident that the complexity of this subject can not be tackled from this standpoint alone. The Arab transitions are therefore the focus of a large part of the articles in the *Panorama* section, dedicated to more specific thematic or geographic areas, which is also the case to a large extent with this edition's *Dossier*, dedicated to the awakening of civil society in the Mediterranean.

The economies of the northern shore of the Mediterranean have also unwillingly become the focus of the international community. The global financial crisis has thrived in Europe's Mediterranean countries. The grave economic situation does not only affect these countries, but has also jeopardised the future of the euro as a common European currency. Faced with these perspectives, the Yearbook has dealt with the economic crisis from three standpoints: the po-

sition of Europe, Mediterranean countries of the EU and the effect on the Mediterranean economies.

Lastly, the *Keys* section also looks at the fresh context in which Euro-Mediterranean relations will develop following the Arab Spring. The new situation has brought about a major change of players in the southern Mediterranean, who, unlike their predecessors, are backed by the democratic legitimacy bestowed upon them by successful elections in their countries. As a consequence of these transformations, the European position in Euro-Mediterranean relations must be reconsidered, and at a time of internal crisis for Europe in which the Mediterranean region plays a significant role.

The theme of the Yearbook's *Dossier*, the awakening of civil society, has been largely determined by events in the southern Mediterranean, since it constitutes a key element in the development of the Arab Spring protests. It was of great importance that the subject be dealt with from the different perspectives of the significant groups during the revolts. Consequently, as well as general articles that outline the role of civil society, there are also articles focussed on the role of young people, women or the unions, and subjects arise such as the use of social movements to develop civic responsibility, while also considering movements outside the Arab world, such as the social justice protests in Israel. The *Dossier* offers a wide range of texts that constitute an in-depth study of the increasingly relevant role of civil society in the Mediterranean.

As in previous editions, the articles in the *Panorama* section complete the overview of the major events and issues of recent months in the Mediterranean space. Aimed at maximising the coverage of key topics, the Yearbook presents an extensive selection of articles that cover aspects such as: the challenges of security in the Mediterranean; constitutional reforms currently being implemented; elections in countries on the northern shore; civil conflict in Syria; youth unemployment; the situation of the tourism sector; gas potential of the eastern Mediterranean; trade of cereals in Arab countries; Euro-Mediterranean air transport; the crisis of the Schengen space; and the impact of social networks in Arab countries. The articles are followed by the second part of the Yearbook that comprises the *Appendices*, where maps, chronologies, charts and statistical tables provide readers with all the information necessary to complete and complement the analytical and opinion articles. The publication thereby becomes a tool that seeks to provide its readers with the keys for understanding the complexity of the Mediterranean area. In a difficult context, the ninth edition of the *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook, Med.2012* represents the capacity and commitment of the IEMed to offer its readers a reference product of information and analysis of today's Mediterranean reality with a strong international perspective. Above all, the publication aims to satisfy the needs of all those who wish to understand the reality of the Euro-Mediterranean space.