

Euro-Mediterranean Area of Higher Education

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Education is a sector that all Euro-Mediterranean countries recognise needs to be on top of the cooperative regional agenda if fostering closer relations across the Mediterranean area is to be achieved. However, since the launching of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in November 1995, the educational field has not received the attention that is necessary to enhance closer cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean.

In order to address this shortcoming, the European Commission, together with its Member States, needs to trigger both public and private stakeholders to work hand-in-hand with a long-term perspective to attract a larger number of Arab students to European shores and vice-versa. This will of course require an updating of procedures for visas, making them more user-friendly for such a category of professionals.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Union for the Mediterranean that commenced in July 2008 is also seeking to add momentum to cooperation in the field of higher education by implementing a plan of action that will witness the launching of a substantial scholarships scheme for university students from Euro-Mediterranean Partnership countries and an increase in mobility grants for higher education staff.

Future Euromed programmes need to ensure that people-to-people interaction is at the forefront, especially among young people. It is essential that a much larger number of students from the Arab world be given the opportunity to study at EU universities. The Bologna Process must be made functional to them. The same goes for joint EU-Arab

research projects. The EU must introduce a package of programmes that seeks to tap into the wealth of intelligence in the Euromed region via scholarships, seminars, and other initiatives. The Euromed Education Ministerial that took place in Cairo in June 2007 has started to serve as a catalyst in this regard.

When it comes to diplomatic training, Malta has already established itself as a regional centre of excellence in the Mediterranean through its educational and training institution, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) at the University of Malta, where over 500 graduates from 41 countries have been trained in the last 18 years. Since 1996, MEDAC, together with the European Commission and the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has also been responsible for coordinating the Euro-Mediterranean Information and Training Seminars, or as they have become more commonly known, the Malta Seminars, which are an official confidence-building mechanism of the Barcelona Process where more than 1,000 diplomats have had the opportunity to interact and openly discuss Euro-Mediterranean issues.

Malta's active participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is perhaps best described as an extension of its co-operative security philosophy. It should also be regarded as a tangible contribution to creating a Euro-Mediterranean region based upon the attributes of positive diplomacy.

The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean (BP: UfM) offers Europe and the international community an opportunity to carry out a strategic reassessment that will allow for more political attention and economic resources to be directed towards upgrading stability and opportunities across the Mediterranean.

The proposal to establish a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) with a focus on education must be welcomed,

as it has again helped focus international attention on a very important geo-strategic crossroads of different civilizations and a crucial post-Cold War theatre of operations. The BP: UfM should not be perceived as a fixed concept but a work in progress –the objective is to create a ‘Barcelona Plus’ situation where Euro-Mediterranean relations are truly re-launched on a more solid footing.

The main factor that should move European and Mediterranean states closer together in future is the mutual security interests they share: Euromed political, economic and cultural cooperation must be strengthened if stability is to be secured in future.

In February 2009, the EU Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, announced that Erasmus Mundus, the European co-operation and mobility programme that supports academic excellence and the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide and fosters cooperation with third countries, is entering a new phase with a substantially increased budget and a wider scope.

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In the period of 2004-2008, Erasmus Mundus and the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Windows offered more than 10,000 scholarships to students and academics from all over the world, with a combined budget of 609 million euros. The programme offered the opportunity to third-country students to obtain a degree in Europe, and to academics to share know-how and to contribute to study programmes through teaching or research activities whilst avoiding the brain drain and favouring vulnerable groups. Thanks to these exchanges, and through cooperation with non-EU partner countries, the programme also made a significant contribution to the enhancement of intercultural dialogue and to the sustainable development of higher education in third countries.

The Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) will fully integrate the former Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Windows and continue to support partnerships between EU and non-EU higher education

institutions as a basis for mobility among students and academics.

The European Commission has confirmed that between 2009 and 2013, the EU would increase its support to the most talented students and professors from countries outside the EU with grants to take part in joint programmes in Europe. It will also extend the scope of the programme to the doctoral level. The expected budget for Erasmus Mundus will be an indicative amount of 950 million euros from 2009 to 2013, a significant increase over previous years.

The key reason to support the Union for the Mediterranean initiative is that it is in both the EU and the Mediterranean states’ interests for the UfM to succeed given the indivisibility of security between Europe and the Mediterranean. Across the Mediterranean, geopolitical and geo-economic indicators are not as positive as they could be. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is lacking, intra-Mediterranean trade remains limited, and North-South economic and educational disparities are resulting in a permanent poverty curtain across the Mediterranean. Moreover, the demographic time-bomb continues to escalate, unemployment continues to increase, illegal migration has reached alarming levels, illiteracy remains at very high levels, and an escalation of ongoing conflicts remains a serious concern.

When it comes to addressing Euro-Mediterranean security challenges, the list of threats and risks is a daunting one. The plethora of security challenges associated with the North-South debate includes illegal migration, terrorism, religious intolerance and the lack of human rights.

Both the EU and the Arab world need a critical reassessment of regional cooperation. Regional cooperation is not an aim in itself. It has to be pursued with a clear strategy, clearly defined objectives and instruments to advance long-term objectives, and a clear sense of priorities. What sort of regional cooperation makes sense? Where is there a chance of advancing?

In the case of the Mediterranean, the task of overcoming the obstacles that are hampering regional cooperation must consist of better management of ongoing regional efforts and more effective monitoring of goals being sought.

A road map that stipulates short, medium, and long-term phases of region-building is necessary if progress is to be registered in establishing a Euro-Mediterranean community of values. All international institutions

VARIOUS CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES OF THE EMP AND THE UFM

- *Conservatoire International des Cuisines Méditerranéennes (International Conservatory of Mediterranean Cuisines, CICM)*

The Mediterranean, though very poor at first, beginning in Antiquity becomes the main cradle of gastronomy and the art of living... thanks to its creative capacities. This age-old heritage is endangered by globalisation. In any case, there is still hope, for the EMP has fostered numerous initiatives, among them the CICM (www.cuisinesmed.com), founded in 1998 by Bruno Giraud-Héraud at La Friche la Belle de Mai establishment, in Marseille (<http://cuisinesmed.lafriche.org>).

Essential innovation for the EMP: the creation of different branches of the Conservatory, known as Conservatories of Mediterranean Cuisines (CCMs) in ten countries: Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey. United by a charter by which the new members commit to abide, the CCMs raise awareness among local populations and ensure that flavours and know-how will endure by passing them on to the latest generations.

A place for reflecting on and safeguarding the culinary heritage of the Mediterranean countries, the CICM promotes products and production areas and enhances their value. It creates labels for local products and restaurants, encourages environmentally-friendly agriculture and tourism, makes this heritage known and defends it on a global scale. Every year it organises seminars, colloquiums, food festivals and 'philosophical banquets'.

In 2008, it organised the 5th *Festival internazionale del cibo di strada* (26-28 September) in Cesena, Italy; *Setting Similar Tables around the Same Sea* (15-18 May) on Crete; and the *Master of Food – Vino* (7-26 May) in Turin. It also participated in the *Torino Food Market Festival* (25-27 April). In December, the CICM launched a programme in Marseille with Ségolène Lefèvre of *Fureur des vivres* (www.fureur-desvivres.com). For the fifth consecutive year, the CICM also organised the Salon Oléicole (olive oil fair) of Draguignan (5-7 December), a Mediterranean culinary event with three countries invited to participate in 2008: Croatia, Italy and Tunisia. In previous years, invited countries or regions were: Catalonia, Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon and Syria.

- *"Saveurs Méditerranéennes": 1er festival international de l'art culinaire*

Held in Tipasa, Algeria (7-9 November 2008), this festival focussed on Mediterranean cuisine and was based on the book *Boire et manger en Méditerranée* (Actes Sud, also available in Spanish, Ediciones del Oriente y del Mediterráneo) by Paul Balta, who gave the opening speech. In any case, since the Ministry of Culture did not pay out the subsidies, the festival turned into a meeting between the CICM and researchers from Algeria's Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique. The organisers plan for the 1st Festival to take place in 2009 or 2010 in Algeria, with the participation of many Mediterranean countries.

- *Fondation René Seydoux pour le monde méditerranéen*

In 2008, the Fondation René Seydoux celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. Directed by Giovanna Tanzarella, its aim is to develop ties of solidarity among countries in the Mediterranean Region, above all in the sphere of culture. Since 1982, it has published the *Mediterranean Directory*, also known as *Répertoire Méditerranéen*, which includes over 700 Mediterranean research centres, cultural centres, associations, organisations and periodicals (<http://fondation-seydoux.org>).

Head of the French National Network of the Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) from 2006 to 2008, the Fondation René Seydoux contributed to restructuring the ALF then handed over the baton in 2009 to the Association pour le Développement Culturel Européen et International (ADCEI) in Marseille, directed by Frédéric Jambu (www.euromediterranean-culture.eu).

- *Permanent Conference of Mediterranean Audiovisual Operators (COPEAM)*

The COPEAM (www.uni-copeam.org), created in 1996, is a forum for exchanging skills and cooperating by means of professional action and training, also promoting the production and distribution of programmes. It has over 120 professional members from 25 Mediterranean countries. Its Secretary General is Alessandra Paradisi, Head of International Relations for the Italian television network, Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI).

The 4th edition of COPEAM University took place in Bejaia, Algeria (5-12 April 2008), under the aegis of Algeria's Entreprise Publique de Television (EPTV) in collaboration with Canal France International (CFI) and with the participation of France Bleu Frequenza Mora and Radio Doualiya. The 90 participants from 16 different countries formed part of 14 transnational, intercultural teams in charge of producing radio or television reports on the topic of *"Tourism and Sustainable Development as Factors of Connection among Peoples"*.

At its 9th meeting, convening in Algiers (8-11 May 2008), North-South cooperation projects in the Mediterranean Region were reinforced and TERRAMED was launched. A multicultural and multilingual satellite channel, it will 'regroup' television programmes (on cultural, institutional, economic, social and sports topics) broadcast by the public channels of Algeria and other Mediterranean Basin countries already available through the Hotbird 2 Satellite.

The COPEAM, in partnership with the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), has launched the first European-Arab television co-production. Called Inter-Rives, it has 14 partner broadcasting companies and, since July of 2008, has been broadcasting a 32-episode programme on three different topics: contemporary art, women and emigration. At the COPEAM's 14th General Assembly (18 May 2008) in Bucharest, Emmanuel Hoog, President of the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (France) was unanimously elected as President. He succeeded Chawky Hamraoui, CEO of Algeria's Entreprise publique de télévision (EPTV). The 15th General Assembly was held in Cairo on 19 April 2009.

- *BabelMed: the leading website on Mediterranean cultures*
BabelMed (www.babelmed.net), *"Porte de la Méditerranée"*, was created in Rome in September 2001 by Nathalie Galesne. This website is available in French, Italian, English and –since 2008– Arabic thanks to the sponsorship of the Compagnia di San Paolo. With over 5,000 articles produced by a network of 20 journalists of the Mediterranean Region, BabelMed offers independent news, lending superb visibility to artistic expression and major debates in the societies bordering the Mediterranean. It thus helps to combat stereotypes and closed ethnic or nationalist attitudes. In 2008, it created a virtual multimedia festival (www.babelmedfestival.net), one of seven cultural programmes funded by the EU.

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with a Mediterranean dimension should provide their think tank platform to map out such a strategy so that a UfM of diverse states becomes a reality in the near future. The Euro-Mediterranean University mechanism that was set up during the Slovenian Presidency of the EU in 2008 is already seeking to promote closer cooperation in the field of higher education between Europe and the Mediterranean.

A road map that stipulates short, medium, and long-term phases of region-building is necessary if progress is to be registered in establishing a Euro-Mediterranean community of values

At the start of the twenty-first century, the Mediterranean must avoid becoming a permanent fault-line between the prosperous North and an impoverished South. The key development to watch in the Mediterranean in the next decade will be to see whether there will be an improvement in the mobility of students across the Mediterranean. If this scenario of socio-cultural interaction does take hold, order will dominate Mediterranean relations. Such a scenario of stability and certainty will spur the economic growth that is necessary to improve the standard of living of all peoples across the Mediterranean.

The only way this future can be achieved is if the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: Union for the Mediterranean succeeds in attracting the interest of international institutions such as the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the IMF and persuades them to become more altruistic in their dealings with the region when it comes to educational programmes. The Mediterranean countries themselves must also adopt more of a self-help mentality. Rather than undermine or diminish the significance of the BP: UfM, the growing socio-economic disparities that exist across the Mediterranean underline further the significance of the BP: UfM, the only multilateral process of its kind in the area.

The Union for the Mediterranean must aim at reviving and recalibrating the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by building on the pattern of Euromed relations that exists today. The UfM offers an opportunity to spur the resurgence of sub-regionalism –intensify sub-regionalism and bilateral interplay in the Mediterranean. It also offers the chance to map out a more action-oriented and target-focused agenda. The UfM will only succeed if matched by leadership and political will that succeed in engaging all European Union and Mediterranean states.

All those who are in favour of a harmonious neighbourhood in the South should welcome the Union for the Mediterranean plan of action! The task is enormous! The success or failure of the Union for the Mediterranean will determine whether Euromed relations in 2020 will become more co-operative dominant.