

# From Classic Barcelona to the Union for the Mediterranean: the Consolidation of the Partnership

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## The Mediterranean before Barcelona

The declaration signed by twenty-seven European and Mediterranean countries in Barcelona, on 28 November 1995, laid out a new, conceptually and politically ambitious paradigm for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. This came after more than twenty years of European policy toward the Mediterranean that was almost exclusively economic and extraordinarily limited.

As early as 1972, the European Economic Community (EEC) had launched the so-called Global Mediterranean Policy. However, despite its sweeping name, the policy was not conceptually ambitious or sufficiently well funded and it did not yield the desired economic results. In 1985, the Economic and Social Committee concluded (ESC 92/85) that not only had third-party Mediterranean countries' trade deficits with the EEC not narrowed, but they had actually grown.

The idea of a Renewed Mediterranean Policy, put forward by the then-European Commissioner Abel Matutes in November 1989, shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall, offered a change of course with regard to prior policy. According to the European Commission, a new regional policy was required, able to address in depth the economic and political challenges of southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. Moreover, it addressed Mediterranean member states' concerns that the Community would devote more attention to the new democracies emerging in Eastern Europe than to third-party Mediterranean countries.

## Rethinking the Mediterranean after the Cold War

Following the end of the Cold War, the concepts of security and development were broadened with major consequences for the future of Mediterranean relations and cooperation. First, the nature of the threat went from being purely and exclusively military (hard security) to non-military (soft security). In the Mediterranean region, the new concept of security included, in addition to the conflicts between states or defined national groups in the Middle East, the Western Sahara, the conflict in Cyprus and the volatile instability in the Balkans following the implosion of the former Yugoslavia, as well as a wide range of new threats, such as: Islamic, ultra-nationalist and other forms of terrorism and fundamentalism, human rights violations, competition for scarce resources, environmental degradation, transnational organised crime, arms stockpiling and trafficking, the demographic explosion and economic and political instability.

As for development, the concept went from referring solely to economic development to encompassing an entire economic, political, social, cultural and environmental *process*. Moreover, the purpose of development now lay in individuals' rights to pursue their own welfare and the responsibility of States to create conditions conducive to it.

These new perceptions of security and development led to an about-face in the international and Mediterranean policy of the European Union and its Member States. Development cooperation became part of a broader political, economic and security cooperation strategy. Indeed, throughout the nineties, a plethora of dialogue and cooperation initiatives emerged throughout the Mare Nostrum: the 5+5 Dialogue (1990), the Mediterranean Forum (1994), NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (1994), etc. These

would culminate in the Barcelona Process or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

### **1995-2005: Implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Construction of Classic Barcelona**

However, three additional events were required for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to emerge. First, it depended on the progressive construction of the EU and, in particular, of its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Under this new system of international cooperation, which began with the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty on 1 November 1993, EU policy included the power to hold conferences and summits with third-party countries. Second, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was made possible through a broad pact between Germany and the northern EU countries on the one hand and the southern European countries (Spain, France, Italy and Portugal) on the other. The former, more interested in integrating and drawing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe closer following the fall of the Berlin Wall, agreed to equip the European Community with a cooperation policy for the Mediterranean. Finally, the 1993 Oslo Accords set the stage for an enduring peace in the Middle East, which then seemed viable, and this fostered an atmosphere of trust and optimism that today is, unfortunately, hard to imagine.

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Thus, on 28 November 1995, the different parties embarked on a long road to establish a region of peace, stability, prosperity and mutual understanding

between the different cultures and peoples of the Mediterranean. It was a major challenge, given that the Mediterranean was viewed as an especially conflictive region, home to areas of easily escalated tension and vast economic asymmetry (the North/South gap) and a place where the process of decolonisation and Cold War bipolar tension had played out with great intensity.

The Barcelona Declaration ushered in a new era in the relations between Europe and its Mediterranean partner countries. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership represented an unprecedented qualitative leap in the EU's Mediterranean policy: it was grounded in a set of shared values and principles (dialogue, democracy, peace, shared prosperity, respect for human rights, etc.), rather than purely economic and trade-related criteria; it was based on 'partnership', i.e., on all members of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership having the same status and participating on equal footing in all the core functions of the new framework of multilateral cooperation; and it had the added value of being the only forum for dialogue shared by Israel and Arab and European countries. Also new was the participation of civil society through the Euromed Civil Forum, which meets every two years and encompasses associations, networks and local authorities. Sponsored by the Catalan Institute of the Mediterranean (today, IEMed) of Barcelona, the Euromed Civil Forum was held right after the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona and was intended to enrich the process with the recommendations of civil society agents from both shores of the Mediterranean. Subsequently, this participation was institutionalised through the creation of the Euromed Civil Platform in 2005.

The purpose of the Barcelona Process was eminently political, in the loftiest sense of the word; however, its engine was to be primarily economic. Indeed, the process drew its inspiration from the model of European construction, as the progressive establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Free-Trade Area, made possible by the growing demand and powerful draw of the large European market, was to give rise to a virtuous cycle of prosperity that would lead to increased trade, investment and job creation in Mediterranean partner countries. All of this was to happen without neglecting the accompanying social measures required to avoid falling into a neoliberal growth model based on excessive deregulation and privatisation of privileges. To this end, the Mediterranean partner countries were offered the MEDA programme,

a funding system that would enable macroeconomic stabilisation in conjunction with international financial organisations, as well as the implementation of institutional and legislative reforms, the modernisation of judicial systems, higher-quality education, etc. Thus, during this initial, 'classic' period of the Barcelona Process or Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (from 1995 to 2005), the groundwork was laid to fulfil the objectives of peace, shared prosperity and mutual understanding. First, Association Agreements were negotiated and adopted between the EU and each Mediterranean partner country. Of course, the entry into force of these agreements was not immediate, as first a long ratification process had to be completed (the Association Agreements had to be ratified by the European Parliament, the Parliament of each Mediterranean partner country and the Parliaments of all Member States of the EU). At the same time, it is also worth noting that not all Mediterranean partner countries quickly leapt at the chance to sign an association agreement. Egypt, Algeria and Lebanon signed their agreements in June 2001, April 2002 and June 2002, respectively. Syria, despite having initiated talks to conclude an agreement in March 1998, still has not signed an agreement today, more than ten years later. Notwithstanding the above, those countries that did not hesitate to implement the stipulated reforms with European political and financial support and technical assistance are the ones that have made most and strongest economic progress.

## Changes in institutions and mind sets and social transformations are not measured in years but generations

The road toward Euro-Mediterranean regional integration is not an easy one. However, whilst there have and continue to be many significant obstacles, the path, i.e., the chosen course, is the right one. We remain *'convinced that the general objective of turning the Mediterranean Basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity requires a strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights, sustainable and balanced economic and social development, measures to combat poverty and promotion of greater*

*understanding between cultures, which are all essential aspects of partnership'* (First Euromed Ministerial Conference, Barcelona, 27-28 November 1995). This process, however, requires perseverance and time. Changes in institutions and mind sets and social transformations are not measured in years but generations. Nevertheless, the situation in the Mediterranean has grown much more complicated since 1995. The winds have turned against it since the eruption of the Second Intifada in 2000, although the values cemented in Barcelona have kept the Partnership afloat. Against all odds, the Barcelona Process has withstood an international and regional context that has had a profound impact on Euro-Mediterranean relations. This context includes the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the growth of international terrorism, the Mohammed cartoon crisis, the Israeli attack on Lebanon (2006), the destruction of Gaza (2007-2008) and the international economic and financial crisis.

Under the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2002, the Barcelona Process managed to lay the first bricks of the institutional architecture of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, beyond ministerial or sectoral conferences and meetings of senior officials. Indeed, the Declaration from the 5th Euromed Conference in 2002 provided for the creation of three institutions: in the political sphere, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly; in the cultural sphere, the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures; and, finally, in the economic sphere, the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), which, whilst not an institution per se, must be considered as such, as we continue to believe that it should ultimately be transformed into a genuine Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank.

### 2005-2008: Consolidation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

Beginning in 2005, the Barcelona Process was reinforced by two new initiatives: the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2003 by the then-President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), promoted by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, building on his speech in Toulon in February 2007. These two new initiatives reinforced the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership both bilaterally (the ENP) and multilaterally (the UfM).

### *Bilateral Reinforcement*

Although conceived of between 2003 and 2004, the ENP was not implemented until 2005-2007. This new initiative, which drew its inspiration from the successes of the EU enlargement, emerged as a response to the largest enlargement process in the EU's history, that of 2004. With the accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the EU's borders were pushed eastward and the European Commission decided to establish a policy based on a pre-accession strategy with some of its new neighbours. The ENP offers Mediterranean partners 'everything but the institutions', that is, access to the Community market and participation in European agencies, but not in the EU institutions (although the possibility that a neighbour country meeting the provisions of the Treaty might work out a different type of relation with the EU has not been ruled out). According to the strategy document *A Strong European Neighbourhood Policy*, dated 5 December 2007, '*The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership remains a cornerstone for the EU's interaction with its southern neighbours. The ENP and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership are mutually reinforcing: the bilateral frameworks of the ENP are better suited to promoting internal reforms, while the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation framework provides the regional context.*'

One of the contributions of the ENP to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), a financial instrument that replaced the MEDA and TACIS Programmes on 1 January 2007. In contrast to the MEDA I (1995-2000) and MEDA II (2000-2006) programmes, the ENPI offers a single instrument for partner countries from the east and south and improvements in the management and disbursement of funds, as it is intended to be more flexible. As under the former MEDA programme, the new funds are allocated above all to the bilateral modernisation programme agreed with each country under its respective Action Plan and likewise aim to improve cross-border cooperation (CBC) (cooperation across the EU's land and sea borders) with a view to assembling a 'ring of friends' from the EU and its neighbours and thereby turning the dividing lines between them into lines for regional cooperation. What makes CBC unique is that third-party Mediterranean countries can access CBC programmes that are not

only funded under the ENPI but also, potentially, through the EU's structural funds. These funds have proven to be particularly effective for the development of the EU's newest Member States.

In addition to the ENPI funds, the Commission offers partner countries the pre-accession technical assistance previously offered solely and exclusively to EU candidate countries to help them adopt the Community *acquis*. This is the case of the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument and twinnings between the local, regional or national governments of EU Member States and those of third-party Mediterranean countries.

### *Multilateral Reinforcement*

At the Paris Summit on 13 July 2008, the Mediterranean Union launched by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy in February 2007 became the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. At the Marseilles Ministerial Conference, held on 4 November of the same year, it became, simply, the Union for the Mediterranean. What should have been a new Mediterranean policy to replace a Barcelona Process considered anaemic by some due to its lack of results ended up pushing the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership far past the classic period of the Barcelona Process. The result could not have been otherwise. The considerable involvement of the European Commission and EU member states in the Barcelona Process was motivated by reasons that went beyond cooperation and solidarity with Southern Europe. Indeed, countries such as Germany and those of Northern Europe had become deeply convinced of their direct interest in maintaining a region of peace and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean. Over the course of the decade, issues such as terrorism, migratory flows, intercultural dialogue (as a result of the Mohammed cartoons) and the trade interests of third-party Mediterranean countries had fostered interest and concern for Mediterranean stability in Northern Europe. Therefore, no new framework for cooperation could be created that would exclude northern countries from the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. In a word, the French plan for the Mediterranean Union could not ignore non-Mediterranean Europe simply because of its lack of coastlines on the *Mare Nostrum*. The launching of the Union for the Mediterranean, an evolution in all senses of the Barcelona Process, gave (and will continue to give) Euro-Mediterranean relations a new boost with regard to regional devel-

opment. The French initiative sparked a major debate among the Euro-Mediterranean countries, which proved critical to merging the French initiative with the long-term path that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has always been. Moreover, the Union for the Mediterranean breathed new life into a regional and even international interest that lent the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership greater visibility. To this end, attention should be called to the inclusion in the UfM of new countries, namely, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Monaco.

Visibility, co-responsibility, a certain dose of pragmatism and realism and the involvement of the private sector emerged as the UfM's main contributions to the Barcelona Process. The final result is a Barcelona Process that has been reinforced and enriched.

The UfM provides for greater co-responsibility through the development of a Euro-Mediterranean institutional architecture in which both European and Mediterranean countries will be jointly responsible for successes and failures. This new institutional structure will deepen the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership's commitment to partnership as such. The permanent Secretariat of the UfM in Barcelona, which will commence operations at the end of the year, is a true international organisation, of which all Euro-Mediterranean countries form a part, in addition to the Arab League and the European Commission. It will provide initiative, drive and the necessary synergies to promote not only the UfM's projects, but also Euro-Mediterranean relations as a whole.

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The UfM likewise brings a commitment to greater pragmatism, realism and visibility, for starters, with

regard to the six projects launched at the Paris Summit: De-pollution of the Mediterranean; Maritime and Land Highways; Alternative Energies: Mediterranean Solar Plan; the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, Civil Protection; and Higher Education and Research. Progress on specific projects will give the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership greater visibility among the population, civil society and the private sector. In other words, it will make it more effective and at the same time imbue it with greater political drive.

The private sector's involvement in the funding of projects can only accelerate the process of regional integration. However, it must be acknowledged that, today, as the multilateral side of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the Union for the Mediterranean's Achilles' heel is, without a doubt, the paucity of funds allocated to a truly titanic endeavour. The private sector has been called upon to play a decisive role in providing new funds for investment in major projects intended to structure the Euro-Mediterranean region. To this end, investment in sectors such as infrastructure, energy and water management may lead to improvements in the business environment, the creation of jobs and improved living conditions for the peoples on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. However, once again, it must be underscored that the Euro-Mediterranean process is a long-term project, in which bilateral cooperation for the internal improvement of countries will continue to play a major role, but in which the reinforced regional cooperation through the Union for the Mediterranean can also yield significant results. It will undeniably require an enormous effort with regard to funding, technical cooperation and political cooperation in the broadest sense of the term; however, the reward will be decisive progress on the lofty goals that no longer belong solely to Barcelona in 1995: the gradual creation in the Mediterranean of an area of peace and stability, of shared economic progress and of mutual understanding and intercultural and social dialogue among the different peoples that share this ideal.