

Human Mobility in the Mediterranean Basin: An Integral Element of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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Some 20 States border the Mediterranean or are surrounded by it, totalling some 400 million inhabitants. Four of them belong to the EU (France, Italy, Spain and Greece), with an average income ten times higher than their neighbours to the South. By 2025, the populations of these four European States will hardly have grown, whereas those of the other States will have risen by 70%. The Mediterranean serves as a sort of geopolitical dividing line between Africa and Europe. The closing of borders combined with the absence of real alternatives to migration renders the Euro-Mediterranean regional integration project launched in 2008 ambiguous.

Today, the Mediterranean is crossed by migrations. These begin at the borders of the European Union: Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Macedonia, Turkey, the Ukraine, the Maghreb and Albania are at once countries of migrant origin, transit and destination. Despite the globalisation of migrant flows, the historical, geographical and cultural proximity (language particularly conveyed by the media) account for migrants' yearning for and choice of Europe. This is the case, for instance, with Spain, where Moroccan migrants constitute the second largest immigrant population; Italy, where the most numerous are Romanians, Albanians and Moroccans; Greece, where Albanians predominate; and France with Maghrebi immigrants. Border cities are growing in importance and are seeing their destinies change dramatically. Melilla, a Spanish enclave on the coast of Morocco, partially lives off smuggling, potential migrants and street children attempting to cross the Straits of Gibraltar. A thriving border-crossing economy has developed over the course of twenty years, all the more prosperous

since crossing has been rendered more difficult by institutional barriers that make prices rise, becoming the source of modern forms of slavery and prostitution.

Countries located along the fringes of Europe have become countries of transit (Turkey, Morocco) and EU policy tends to assign them a control function. Despite the closure of borders, the Southern Mediterranean Basin constitutes a region of considerable emigration: Morocco (3.1 million émigrés), Turkey (3.3 million), Egypt (2.7 million) and Algeria (1 million). In Morocco, emigration has doubled in eleven years. This can be ascribed to a significant demographic gap in terms of age pyramids, massive unemployment and underemployment, even for the most qualified, the existence of emigration policies focussing on remittances and designed to alleviate not only the pressure on the job market but at times also political and social dissent. There are chain migrations in Turkey, which has become a migration and transit zone for migrants from the nearby countries of Iraq, Moldavia, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as in the Maghreb, which has become a region of emigration for the local population and one of immigration and transit for Sub-Saharan migrants. The closing of borders carried out by Maghreb countries in application of European border externalisation plans has led illegal migrants to change their routes, now departing from African coasts to reach the Canary Islands by sea rather than crossing towards Gibraltar, or crossing the desert and attempting to reach Sicilian islands rather than Brindisi, rendering the crossings more dangerous and leading to many thousands of deaths on the outskirts of the EU since 2000.

But Europe attracts only half of the migrants from South Mediterranean Countries (SMCs), because they also leave for Arabic countries such as Libya and the Gulf States, as well as for the US and Canada (10%, of which 60% has a university degree). Certain

SMCs are also countries of immigration: 3.6 million inhabitants were born abroad. This is the case for Israel, Turkey, the Palestinian Territories and Jordan. Add to that an unknown number of illegal migrants who are either immigrants or in transit, approximately 100,000 of which are Sub-Saharan migrants in the Maghreb and Sudanese in Egypt. The majority of South Mediterranean Countries that have emigration policies do not have immigration policies –except for penalising illegal immigration (Morocco: law passed in 2003, Tunisia: law passed in 2004)–, much less policies for integration. Immigrants are sometimes regarded as competitors and not future citizens.

Whereas in the Gulf States, the appearance of unemployment among the national population is beginning to change the statistics, Morocco remains, along with Egypt, one of the main countries of emigration of the region. Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Yemen have also become countries of transit for entering Europe. Emigration is bound to continue as long as the gap between oil-producing and non oil-producing countries continues and the immigration pressure will endure due to the amount of unemployed youth in the Maghreb, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan and Palestine. Yet the majority of Arab countries are experiencing a rapid fall in birth rate, meaning younger generations having few children and there is thus a lighter family load on the parents, as they themselves belong to large families. They are therefore highly available in the short-term to carry out their life projects abroad. Countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen encourage their populations to emigrate while fostering the maintenance of ties by facilitating remittances of funds, supporting associations focussing on development and strengthening *jus sanguinis* policies such that émigrés keep their original nationalities. Algeria –due to its colonial past– and Lebanon –due to the strain on the fragile equilibrium of its communities– hold more ambiguous positions.

Certain profiles predominate among these new types of migrants: young men with a higher education from the urban middle class with vague aspirations to Western modernity; isolated women with a school education attempting to gain economic and personal independence, but also at times seeking freedom of expression; minors, often the victims of exploitation of all sorts; highly qualified elite seeking professional fulfilment on a par with their skills or talents; individuals willing to give up an arm and a leg to improve their condition; and groups that are always

mobile, such as the Roma. Apart from refugees and marriage-based immigration, many of these new migrants aspire more to mobility than to definitive settlement. They often consider their stay as a passage towards other, more desirable destinations (USA, Canada) or as a temporary stay before returning to their countries of origin.

In the countries where these migrants settle, two migration profiles predominate: 'origin-host country pairs' and 'quasi-diasporas.' An origin-host country pair can be defined as one nationality predominantly settling in a single host country, a situation often inherited from a colonial past. For instance, 95% of Algerians in Europe are living in France, along with 70% of Tunisians in Europe, while 80% of Greek migrants, 72% of Turkish migrants, 68% of Polish migrants and migrants from the former Yugoslavia in Europe live in Germany, and the majority of migrants from Commonwealth countries are in the United Kingdom. Albanian migrants in the EU are almost exclusively living in Italy and Greece, and the same is true of Brazilians in Portugal. The other configuration is that of 'quasi-diasporas:' a nationality present in numerous European countries and creating powerful transnational economic, cultural, religious, familial and marriage networks among its different groups. The most emblematic example is that of the Turks –nearly 3 million in Europe–, who form an origin-host country pair with Germany, but who are also present in Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Northern Europe as a quasi-diaspora. They are followed by the Moroccans, another quasi-diaspora, who number half a million in France but who also comprise one of the largest foreign populations in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. In the past, Italians fit this profile, as did former Yugoslavians, though to a lesser degree.

Mediterranean Europe: From Emigration to Immigration

In twenty years, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Malta, former countries of emigration, have become countries of immigration. This abrupt transition can be associated with the concurrence of several factors: the geographical proximity of these countries to the external borders of the European Union, making them popular places of passage for illegal migration (to Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, the island of Lampedusa, the Greek isles), because the Mediterran-

ean is the most inconsistent border in the world; the often disparate implementation of European border control schemes; the accelerated ageing of the population; the demand for labour in sectors that cannot be delocalised (tourism, the catering and hotel sector, fishing, agriculture, caring for the elderly, home services for nationals as well as for European elderly and retirees); the existence of an informal labour market; and frequent recourse to 'mass' regularisation in order to absorb part of the illegal immigrant population. Public opinion is still wary of the idea of long-term immigration, though the immigrant population is a stakeholder in their societies.

Italy

Today, the legal immigrant population has surpassed 2.6 million, of which 556,000 are Romanians (15.1%), 387,000 Moroccans, 381,000 Albanians, 195,000 Ukrainians and 186,000 Chinese. With a net legal migrant inflow of 222,400 individuals in 2006 (entries less exits), Italy was the first European country to adopt an active policy of admission and to experiment with what would be incorrectly qualified as a quota system (with a ceiling of 350,000 non-EU immigrants in 2006), which did not produce the anticipated results. The possibilities for professional placement in niches in a highly segmented labour market have attracted numerous illegal immigrants, legalised over the course of vast, mass regularisation operations (called 'sanatorie'). The drastic fall in birth rate in just one generation and the entry of women onto the labour market have created new professions associated with 'care' (home care, paraprofessional medical care, not well covered by the hospital system or by institutions). The response of the authorities was case by case adaptation, responding to suggestions by employers (who are also voters) despite the populism of certain anti-immigrant political parties. The last major regularisation took place in 2005 under Silvio Berlusconi. Another form of flexibility emerged from the transposition in Italy of the Swiss system of bilateral labour agreements, often with neighbouring countries such as Albania, in order to struggle against irregular immigration and meet the seasonal needs of agriculture and construction. To limit the effects of attraction, it came with readmission agreements with buffer countries such as Libya. Social and cultural policies of associative and religious initiative have assisted vulnerable populations and entered into constructive dialogue with Islam (Community of Sant'Egidio).

Though Italy's nationality rights continue to be governed essentially by the concept of *jus sanguinis*, this allows it, on the other hand, to maintain close ties with Italians abroad, present in many European countries (France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium), as well as in major immigration countries (USA, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Australia), being a population that also votes in legislative elections.

Spain

With 4,192 million legal foreign nationals in 2008, Spain is the EU country to have experienced the most rapid growth of its foreign population over the past ten years. It is also the country with the greatest number of EU nationals (1.9 million, or 46.8%), many of them retirees. Among the 2.2 million non-EU nationals (53.19%), ten nationalities comprise 80% of these citizens: Moroccans (675,900), Ecuadorians (500,000), Romanians (380,000), Colombians (270,000), Bolivians (135,000), Dominicans, Peruvians and Argentines (the Latin Americans all told numbering 1.2 million), Chinese (126,000) and Ukrainians (65,000). The regions with the highest presence of foreign nationals are the eastern seaboard and the capital: Catalonia (907,000), Madrid (759,000), the Community of Valencia (543,000) and Andalusia (530,000).

It is in this country where the immigration process has been the fastest (there were 1.3 million legal foreign nationals in 2002), Spain being the European country to have taken in the greatest number of foreign nationals in ten years, ahead of Germany. Immigration policy has consisted in a series of mass regularisations (the last two being in 2001 and 2005). The epicentres of tensions associated with the arrival of illegal immigrants on *cayucos* and other *pateras* –fragile open boats– are Gibraltar, Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish enclaves in Morocco), the Canary Islands, Western Sahara and, farther away, Mauritania and Senegal: between 1 January and 30 September 2006, some 27,000 individuals landed on the Canary Islands –five times the number in 2005 and triple the record in 2002–, not to mention the 3,000 or so who drowned along the 1,400 kilometres separating Senegal from the Canary Islands. In 2007, 20,000 arrivals on 800 boats were recorded. The quota system, established to supply sectors requiring a labour force (agriculture, tourism) has been modified. Illegal immigration is estimated at some 800,000 individuals in 2006. In 2005, 600,000 illegal immigrants were legalised, of whom 40% were Latin Americans (out of 692,000

petitions). This was the fourth regularisation scheme: since 1990, some 1,145,000 irregular immigrants have been regularised.

The arrival of three million foreign nationals over the past five years has been the source of half of the country's rise in GDP. In November 2006, a law granting the same rights to Spaniards residing abroad as to Spaniards in Spain was passed, fostering ties with the diaspora and allowing descendants of Republicans having gone into political exile the opportunity of taking on Spanish nationality. In Spain, the fifth foreign nationality consists of British, who are the sixth in Portugal. This phenomenon can also be observed in France, where it is often referred to as 'Britishland.'

Portugal

Of the 432,000 foreign nationals living in Portugal in 2005, half were from their former colonies (Brazil and the PALOP, African countries where Portuguese is the official language), namely Brazil (30%), Cape Verde (12%), Angola and Mozambique. Chronically short of manpower due to its ageing population, a significant amount of emigration (10% of the total population), the role of agriculture, tourism and retirees from other European countries having settled there, Portugal has concluded labour agreements with countries of Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldavia, Romania) and has proceeded to carry out successive regularisation operations. Its policy of 'living together,' based on multiculturalism, is now being refocused towards more inclusive integration.

Greece

Among the 553,000 foreign nationals living in the country in 2005 (7% of the total population), the majority are from neighbouring countries (Bulgaria and Albania alone accounting for 60% of the foreign population). So-called 'Pontic Greeks,' returning after 1989 from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia and the Ukraine, have been allowed to acquire Greek nationality. Two regularisation operations took place in 2005 and 2007. In this country afflicted by demographic ageing, the immigrant population has experienced rapid growth through various migratory waves: Albanians in the early 1990s, migrants from the Balkans, India and Pakistan after 1995, and Bulgarians, Sub-Saharan Africans, Romanians and Asians after 2001. Greece employs its migrants in agriculture, fishery, construction and tourism. In the year 2000,

500,000 migrants were seasonal workers, and Greece is experiencing an increase in illegal immigration. The latest migrants are from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia. In rural Greece, characterised by great immigrant diversity, migrants contribute to the development of local economic activity. 70% of immigrants have been living in Greece for more than ten years.

In the South: Several Migratory Areas

There are several migratory areas in the South: the west (Maghreb/Europe), the Balkans, and the east (Mashreq/Near East). There are also exchanges from east to west (Romania, Moldavia and Ukraine/Portugal, Spain and Italy) and south-south (Algeria/Libya, Egypt/Gulf States).

Maghreb-Europe

It is the contrast between Europe and the Maghreb that is the greatest dividing line: whereas the countries along the northern shore of the Mediterranean have experienced a population growth of approximately a third from 1950 to 2000, going from 158 million to 212 million inhabitants, the countries along the southern coast of the Mediterranean have tripled their populations, going from 73 million in 1950 to 244 million in 2000. The natural growth rate of the population in north shore countries during the 1990s was 1.5%, as opposed to 20.2% in south shore countries, despite the demographic decline observed in Eastern and Southern Mediterranean Countries during that time. Due to its economic and demographic context, the SMCs offer conditions conducive to intense migratory circulation in the Euro-Mediterranean area. 50% of today's population is under twenty years of age, whereas the North is experiencing either stagnation or decline in population, depending on the country. An increase in urban population has ensued in the South: in 2000, with the exception of Albania, Bosnia and Egypt, the urban population surpasses 50% and megalopolises often serve as the anterooms of illegal migration. By 2025, the population of the Maghreb is expected to have grown by 48%, in contrast to 3% for that of the EU.

Employment constitutes another dividing line: the GDP per EU inhabitant is 14 times higher than in the Maghreb. It is 20 times higher in Germany than in the Maghreb, 19 times higher in France, and 12

times higher in Spain. Fund remittances associated with emigration represent 6.3% of the GDP in Morocco, 2.3% in Algeria and 4.1% in Tunisia. Foreigners do not only migrate in order to work, but also in search of a new lifestyle.

Illegal migrants are sometimes caught in the vicinity of the Sicilian and Greek islands. With over 2,500 deaths per year, this traditional zone of passage, exchange, confrontation and dialogue has become a hotbed of human trafficking due to the semi-militarised borders warding off non-EU citizens. SMCs, while remaining countries of emigration, have also become countries of immigration and transit for a Sub-Saharan population. The latter then find themselves in a sort of airlock if they do not manage to cross the Mediterranean

All SMCs hope for the relaxation of the visa regimes imposed by Europe in 1986 and aspire to have their economies meet the labour needs of their northern neighbours. For them, migration is an economic resource (fund remittances), a social resource (exportation of unemployment), and a factor of (political and cultural) modernisation. The discourse on brain drain is beginning to shift because the countries are realizing the benefits they can gain from exporting their skilled workers, as well as their incapacity to employ them all.

Mashreq: South-South Migration

Migration to the Arabian Peninsula forms part of a regional logic dominated, on the one hand by the oil income and, on the other by a young, underemployed population. But oil-producing countries do not exclusively employ Arab or Muslim immigrants (Asians are often more numerous) and the latter do not only migrate to those countries: whereas Mashreq emigration moves to the Gulf States, Maghrebi emigration (with the exception of Libya, which is a country of immigration) is more oriented towards Europe, Canada and the United States.

For several decades now, East Mediterranean Countries (Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Egypt and, by extension, Jordan) have faced numerous conflicts causing many to go into exile. The Palestinian diaspora, 4-5 million strong, has essentially settled in neighbouring Arabic countries, the Gulf States and Europe and the USA. Since 2000, some 100,000 Palestinians are estimated to have left the West Bank for Jordan and the West. In one of the most densely populated areas of the world, 1.5 mil-

lion individuals live in the Gaza Strip. Whereas Egypt continues to limit the presence of Palestinians on its territory, Jordan, on the other hand, is the only Arabic country granting Palestinians its nationality. A large influx of Jews from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) between 1990 and 2000 (1.4 million) has modified the cultural balances between the different components of the Israeli population. Moreover, Israel has become a host country to labour immigrants from the world over, whose percentage has now surpassed that of Palestinian workers from the occupied territories in the agriculture and construction sectors, with a status of 'long-term temporary residents.'

Historically, Egypt is traditionally more of a country of immigration, offering political asylum to people belonging to minority confessions and Ottoman protégés. However, Egypt has experienced a tardy migratory mobilisation since the 1970s. The Gulf States have constituted the favoured destination, due to the relative cultural and linguistic continuity and because the oil shocks of the 1970s created a high labour demand. Nevertheless, this model of temporary emigration towards the Gulf States is fragile. The Gulf War in 1991 entailed a significant wave of 'repatriates from Iraq.' At the same time as this crisis, the Egyptians began doubting the State's capacity to guarantee employment –upward social mobility seemed to have been suspended. The West, and primarily France and Italy, now constitutes a new destination for Egyptian migration.

Candidates for emigration to Europe are essentially city dwellers, with higher education and often from Coptic Christian communities. Even if this second migratory generation has the benefit of the experience of the migrants to the Gulf States and uses family, village and confessional networks to succeed in their migrations, community groups cannot be observed in the host countries, but rather on the contrary, there is a rupture vis-à-vis their environment of origin. Moreover, in contrast to migrations to the Gulf States, settlement in the West often assumes a long-term character.

In Syria, Iraqi refugees, settled in Damascus. In Jordan, they joined a large population of Palestinians. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2007, of two million Iraqis fleeing the country, one million went to Syria, more than 750,000 to Jordan, over 150,000 to Egypt, and at least 40,000 to Lebanon. In 2006, 1.9 million were displaced within the country and 5,000 were

admitted to the United States, and the same number again in 2007.

Turkey

Turkey first became a country of emigration in the 1960s, with migrants primarily moving to Europe, but also to the Arabian Peninsula as of the 1970s (3 million first-generation immigrants were living in these two regions in 2006, not to mention the generations born of immigrants in Europe). It is estimated that the decrease in birth rate of the mid-1980s will not manage to reduce migrations until 2010 or 2020. But Turkey has also become a region of transit for migrants from the Middle East or Central Asia, and consequently, a country of immigration (1.3 million) for migrants waiting to move on to a second destination.

Irregular foreign workers numbered some 1.5 million in 2008, employed informally particularly in domestic work, construction and agriculture. Iran's Islamic revolution of 1979 and repression against the Kurds in Iraq, particularly in 1988, caused a massive influx of Iranians and Iraqi Kurds. Since then, Turkey has experienced an explosion of incoming forced migration (Bosnians in 1992, Kosovars in 1999, Albanians in 2001). In addition, there are a great deal of cross-border labour migrants commuting from countries of the former Soviet Union, immigration of ethnic Turks returning from Bulgaria since 1990 (half a million) and migrants in transit who do not plan on remaining in Turkey. In 2001, the number of entries per year was estimated at 300,000.

Turkey offers certain advantages that make it attractive to migrants. First of all, it is near countries of emigration and constitutes a bridge to Europe. Secondly, border controls are weak and circulation within the country is easy. However, these flows are often illegal and therefore difficult to quantify. Hence, Turkey has never considered itself a country of immigration. Concerned about its national homogeneity and the preservation of its sovereignty, it shows a preference for the return of immigrants to their countries of origin and escorts rejected asylum seekers to the borders. At the heart of an unstable region, the country, moreover, tries to limit the flows. For populations of Turkish origin, a real policy of integration is implemented. Turkey has been reproached for this discriminatory policy, and has experienced a great deal of international pressure, in particular from the EU. Its status as a candidate for accession to the EU implies cooperation and progressive integration

of the EU *acquis*. In addition, the majority of official initiatives concerning immigration are much more the result of external pressure than of a real national immigration policy.

And finally, Turkey is the leading country of extra-European migration to Europe for the number of its émigrés (3 million), distributed among numerous European countries (Germany, with whom Turkey forms an origin-host country pair, Austria, Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Switzerland), where they serve as a source of remittances for their country of origin. Turkish expatriates build transnational economic, religious, matrimonial and cultural networks thanks to associative community life. Access to dual nationality in many countries hitherto reticent (such as Germany) has allowed second generations to be present both 'here' and 'there', and to become voters in both countries, allowing Turkey to exercise a sort of 'diplomacy of migration' thanks to its diaspora and its associative networks.

European Reactions

The struggle against illegal migration is a declared EU priority in the Mediterranean Region. Common regulations are being defined on an EU-wide scale to struggle against illegal immigration since 1990. The stepping up of border controls is also symbolised by the radar-assisted SIVE (Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior, i.e. Spain's border surveillance system) between Spain and the African coast. In Seville in June 2002, EU Member States decided to accelerate the process of migratory policy harmonisation towards greater 'equilibrium,' but they focussed on the struggle against illegal immigration and abuse of asylum requests: readmission clauses, joint management of migratory flows (Operation Ulysses, coordinated by Spain and designed to combat illegal immigration arriving by sea). This security trend was consolidated at the Thessalonica Summit in 2003. Readmission agreements between the EU and SMCs have tended to turn many buffer States into the 'border guards' of the EU area, other States (in particular African ones) already being bound by an obligatory readmission clause. Immigration and asylum liaison officers to the Frontex Programme (EU Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at External Borders, 2005), formalized into a specialised agency based in Warsaw, carry out stepped-up controls of external EU borders. EU repatriation (that is, repatri-

ation carried out by several EU countries as a joint effort) is considered a strong factor of dissuasion. In 1995, the Barcelona Process placed migration within the category of co-development, implemented through bilateral and multilateral agreements. The MEDA I (1995-1999) and MEDA II (2000-2006) Programmes sought to create decentralised forms of co-development in southern countries based on partner development associations. Hopes were soon dashed, however, due to several factors: the implementation of the EU security plan for border control and combating terrorism; the asymmetry of trade (55% of SMC exports and 50% of their imports are to/from the EU, whereas the SMCs represent but 7% of foreign trade for the latter); the absence of democratisation of political regimes; the instability of the region; the weak appropriation of the Partnership by the SMCs; and the unequal interest of North Mediterranean Countries in the latter.

In 2005, the EU Green Paper proposed creating an overall framework stipulating the conditions of entry for non-EU workers as well as the adoption of sectoral regulations applicable to certain categories. Yet the commission recommended respecting preferential employment for the EU nationals.

In 2006, the foreign ministers of 57 European and African countries met in Rabat with a view to adopting an action plan against illegal migration combining security measures with the implementation of development projects. This was the first time that the struggle against illegal immigration and co-development policies were considered together. The aim was above all to have African countries accept repatriation of their nationals. The Rabat Conference was followed by a 5+5 Conference on Malta in the autumn of 2006.

A conference on border control was held in Tripoli in November 2006 to create placement agencies in countries of departure and establish quotas for seasonal workers. In February 2007, the European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security, Mr. Frattini, in charge of migration and asylum matters, put forth the idea of a Blue Card allowing mobility for highly qualified non-EU nationals with the EU, while reasserting the importance of the struggle against illegal immigration. Many of these initiatives are conducted by Spain, the leading destination country for undocumented migrants and having reached a population of 4.5 million foreigners at a pace of 200,000 new immigrants per year for the past five years. For

its part, Libya seems to have been attempting to play the role of border guard to Europe for several years now.

In 2008, the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, launched under the French EU Presidency (July-December 2008) makes five commitments: organisation of legal immigration according to each Member State's capacity for taking migrants in, joint control of external borders, organisation of the effective removal of undocumented foreigners, common asylum policy, promotion of co-development and aid to development. However, it has no legal force, as it is not a treaty but rather a commitment undertaken by the 27 Member States to foster a future policy. Some months earlier, in June 2008, the European Parliament passed a 'return' directive extending the time of detention in centres to up to 18 months before illegal immigrants are escorted to the border.

The launching by France of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in July of 2008 mobilised all of the Mediterranean coastal countries around major common causes such as depollution of the Mediterranean and the matters of water and energy. Yet the project has not taken any position concerning the circulation of migrants between the northern and southern shores. The UfM has progressively removed migration from its agenda. It is, however, difficult to imagine a real union if the circulation of people is highly restricted and if the 'middle sea' becomes a major cemetery for illegal migrants.

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