

# Migrations within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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The signature of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995 marked the intention of the fifteen European member states to create a dialogue with the countries situated in the Southern Mediterranean. It started with the idea that Europe could not be built up in an isolated way, on the basis that it was expanding to the East and it had to take a stand regarding the South.

The initial idea was to restore a certain balance between the East – where the visa system would be progressively abolished and enlargement procedures would be discussed – and the South, whose previous relations had been close. The anchor point of this dialogue was the Mediterranean.

From the beginning, the fact that the Mediterranean is not a homogeneous entity hindered the terms of the dialogue. As the geographer Yves Lacoste summarised, the Mediterranean is an olive tree civilisation. There are not one but three Mediterranean seas: one in the West, which is essentially Western Europe and the Maghreb countries; a second one consisting of the Balkans and finally one in the Orient, the Near East, and the Mashreq countries on the Mediterranean coast. There are various problems as the Northern/Southern relationship is essentially concerned with the Western Mediterranean, the objectives were very quickly determined fundamentally by the European calendar and not by the Southern countries. These aims were ambitious as the Barcelona Process set itself the goal of “turning the

Mediterranean basin into an area of communication, trade and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity”. Amongst these objectives was to begin a dialogue between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries about democracy and culture. This is because at the time some Northern countries had only recently become democratic (Spain and Portugal). Other aims included the issue of peace and security, mainly referring to the Near-East situation, and the question of economic development.

## **Security, Peace and Economic Development**

These three areas, defined by the Northern countries, have not really been taken into consideration even by the Southern countries. The Barcelona Declaration was signed by the 15 member states of the European Union and 12 Southern Mediterranean partners, amongst which two, Cyprus and Malta, joined the Union in 2004. Today it is known that in order to carry on a process there has to be a feeling of “ownership”, in the sense of the appropriation of the objectives of a dialogue by both parts. This has been, beyond doubt, one of the reasons that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has been slow to make an impact. Moreover, the Algerian crisis, the uncertain situation in the Middle East, and the economic stagnation in several countries on the Southern Mediterranean coast in 1995, which resulted in continuous emigration, made the dialogue difficult. The idea of establishing a system based on the NAFTA was added to the three initial common objectives. The intention was to set up a free economic trade

zone as an alternative solution to migrations (facilitating the movement of goods in order to avoid the movement of people). In the NAFTA, the emigration issue is not mentioned free trade is simply established with the prediction that it will eventually impact on migration, but this is not mentioned in the overall perspective of this process. It is worthy of note that through the NAFTA, the free trade process between the three countries has had an influence on Mexican development but has had no impact on Mexican emigration. According to United States estimates, approximately 12 to 13,000,000 illegal immigrants have been recorded the United States safeguard Canada by absorbing most of the Latin-American emigration, especially that coming from Mexico. Free trade has therefore not affected migration, the movement of people not being an alternative to the movement of goods. In the Barcelona Process, Europe attempted to secure its borders by eliminating customs barriers with the countries on the southern Mediterranean coast, especially in the Western Mediterranean. At the beginning the expiration date should have been 2011, but then it was postponed indefinitely. Today, there is no compensation effect to be reported between one and the other: the movement of goods does not imply a drying-up of migration. Some studies show rather the opposite: the more movement of goods, trade and exchange there is, the more people circulate. Let's take the example of Moroccan tomatoes saying, “if you don't want Moroccans in your country, buy their tomatoes”. An industrial type of agriculture for the production of standard tomatoes, which could be exported on to the European market, was set up in Southern

Morocco in the Agadir region. The consequence of this industrial production was to offer a market for Moroccan production, while concentrating agricultural development in limited areas with greater prosperity. This caused the unemployment of a large series of small producers who turned out to be potential candidates for emigration. On the other hand, the mentioned rural exodus phenomenon induced by production could potentially speed up emigration. So you get “both the Moroccans and the tomatoes” at the same time; in reality, the movement of goods has never stopped people circulation. The Venetian Republic was a location with intense cultural mobility and trade of goods, but it also had intense mobility of population. Such is the case today in the Mediterranean, with both a geopolitical fracture and intense crossings and exchanges.

### **Evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue Ten Years After**

The Euro-Mediterranean dialogue was set up on two levels. First, bilateral cooperation through association agreements with Tunisia, Israel, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria and the Palestinian Authority. An agreement signed with Lebanon is waiting to be ratified. The content of these agreements varies from one partner to the other. So, MEDA programmes financed structural adjustment policies in Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan. The second level is regional multi-lateral cooperation which intends to complete bilateral cooperation in the areas of education, human rights, development, environment and culture. Its pace is marked by Euro-Mediterranean conferences and supported by an adequate system, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

#### *Political and cultural dialogue*

In 2005, several events have led to the assessment of the results of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue: the assessment has been mitigated because of a deep disappointment in the South, which was due to the lack of willingness from the Union countries to make this partnership one of the priorities of their agen-

da. As for politics and culture, no regime on the Southern Mediterranean coast has evolved towards democracy. However, some countries such as Morocco have opened up in quite a significant way. On the contrary, faced with radical Islamism, European countries seemed to fear that the opening to democracy mainly favours regimes that claim to follow Islam. The implementation of universal suffrage in most of the southern Mediterranean countries, would lead to regimes in power that follow Islam. When choosing between an authoritarian secular regime or universal suffrage system and political Islam, European countries chose the authoritarian secular regime. They trusted more authoritarian non-democratic countries which guaranteed secularism, rather than more democratic states which admit universal suffrage but have religious people in power. This was the choice made by most European countries in this area.

#### *Security and peace*

In this domain, everything is put at risk by the Near and Middle East conflict. There has not been much satisfaction in this area if one takes into consideration the central role represented by the Palestinian issue in the political life of regimes on the Southern coast of the Mediterranean. Sometimes this even serves as an outlet for dissent to finally “sweeten the pill of the imposition of authoritarian regimes” by playing a game which consists of partly diverting the population’s main interest towards the Palestinian issue in order to avoid mobilization against the various regimes’ most recent events.

On their part, the European countries reinforced their borders through a series of agreements signed with southern countries making of them the border guards of Europe (readmission agreements), reasserting the dissuasion strategy against the illegal crossing of borders by criminalizing it, and by toughening visa and asylum regulations (Dublin II agreements, 2003).

#### **Prosperity and Development**

The Mediterranean is an area where the development gap is the largest in the

world within a very small geographic area: the gap between the GDP of countries on the Southern coast and those on the Northern one is in a ratio of 1 to 20. This explains why this zone is an area of intense emigration, because of the widespread diffusion around the Mediterranean of the image of Europe promoted by the media, by the transnational networks’ intense activity creating a series of exchanges between the Northern and Southern coast, by weddings which form a significant part of emigration, by cash transfers (14 billion euros were transferred from Europe to immigrants’ countries of origin; not all of these being Mediterranean, but for the most part consisting of Morocco and Turkey). All this means many exchanges, but also many ruptures.

Yet Europe continues to block the way: visa regulations have been kept in place everywhere, while Southern countries’ main request was to turn them more flexible in order to improve the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. Moreover, Europe reinforces its security system in order to stop the transit from the South to the North (as is the case in the Canaries towards Spain). Many European summits have had this effect, Seville in 2002, Thessalonica in 2003, or The Hague in 2004. The European countries’ planned and united mobilisation against the circulation of people in the Mediterranean area as we can see.

No answer was given to the matter of visas, which is one of the most significant requests made by society when heads of State go to the Maghreb countries as individuals or as a group. Readmission agreements have involved southern countries in supervising their own borders, as has been seen in Morocco, especially when sub-Saharan emigrants passed through Ceuta last autumn, and more recently when the European Union helped Spain to confront the influx of sub-Saharan illegal emigrants who were arriving in the Canaries. With regard to those originating from the Mediterranean region, the right to asylum is very strictly limited and there is a continuous violation of human rights. This is denounced by several associations which observe the situation in detention centres – first in the waiting areas, then in the detention centres as individuals wait to be escorted back to the border, and also

during the process itself of being escorted back to the border.

Other elements can be highlighted. Difficulties of dialogue also arise from the fact that European countries' interest in the matter is unsystematic. Northern and Eastern European countries do not devote their energies to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, as those countries are not their neighbours. It is not their priority, and they are not concerned if the dialogue is not functional and if there are illegal migrations passing through the Mediterranean. Admittedly there are many Moroccans in Denmark and Holland. However, Finland, Norway or other countries actively involved in the Schengen agreement, such as Poland, have a very limited interest in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. This is visible when taking part in meetings in Brussels. This is the first problem. Second problem: there are not many countries that were originally involved in sponsoring the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. France was very active in this respect, but it was mainly Spain that sponsored it through its Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was very active in this debate. It is not by chance that the final evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean agreements was carried out in Barcelona in the autumn of 2005. Some European countries' limited interest in the matter weakens certain aspects of the dialogue. Finally, the third factor is that Europe's opening up to the East refocused its attention on the consolidation of the *acquis communautaire*, on the conditions for the new countries to join, and the harmonisation of European policies. All this prevented a stronger interest in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

#### *Development*

Concerning the last subject, the development issue, it can be stated that European countries' encouragement towards states on the Southern coast of the Mediterranean has less of an effect on growth than the transfers of funds carried out by the emigrants themselves. These transfers are the essential element in the financial contribution between the North and the South, as companies contribute very little because of uncertainty about the

stability of a certain number of countries on the Southern coast of the Mediterranean, which they define as "risk countries", in addition to the fact that the countries themselves offer them very limited incentives for development. Some European programmes deriving from this partnership, the MEDA programmes in particular, attempted to move from a developmental policy which was carried out from State to State to one that would more affect society. Co-development programmes have become decentralised co-development programmes which operate, for example, from city to city. These programmes consist in the common sharing of interests and resources of a northern metropolis with a southern metropolis, thus allowing population to become closer. Otherwise they link development programmes with associations that act as mediators between the North and the South, these are mainly run by migrants' associations to encourage the creation of micro-project policies in the Southern countries. If this has not created development, it has provided at least a start in building networks and involving society in the issue of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. This has been achieved thanks to a small elite consisting predominantly of members of different associations.

As for the rest, we are still in the phase of making declarations (the European Neighbourhood Policy, introduced in 2005) and there appears to have been a great delay with regard to the initial objectives laid out by the Barcelona Process.

#### **Evaluation**

Which perspectives remain today to relaunch this dialogue? Politically, a certain number of regimes are completely caught up in an authoritarian drifts and have become "quasi-monarchies", in Rémy Leveau's words. Authoritarian republican regimes have become hereditary monarchies. This type of evolution is found in certain countries and does not include actual monarchies such as Morocco and Jordan. A country which has opened up to democracy is Morocco, where there has been a significant evolution. However, at the moment it is dif-

ficult to predict any type of evolution taking place in Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Egypt or in Libya. There are still many uncertainties about the evolution of these countries. This is one of the main obstacles to open dialogue.

The situation in the Near East is changing. It could be that Hamas's rise to power will unblock of the situation, but for the moment this is highly confused and it is difficult to determine whether it will have an impact on the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue or not.

As for emigration policy, we are in a sort of status quo position in which there is hesitation between on the one hand opening the borders to immigrants from the southern coast of the Mediterranean with qualifications, or opening them in a bilateral way through short-term labour agreements (as a form of seasonal immigration), and on the other hand wishing to strengthen border supervision and fight against illegal immigration along the European borders. As both these objectives are proposed at the same time, the European position remains contradictory on this matter.

Moreover, demographic forecasts are a fundamental issue in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, as on the Southern coast of the Mediterranean 50% of the population is less than 25 years old, compared to an ageing Europe. However, at the same time, it is known that in the Maghreb countries the demographic transition has already started, and that this "golden age" situation will change (young population, available and numerous to look after its relations as it does not have many responsibilities itself, not having many children). It will continue until the 2030's. This situation will concern one generation, then the Southern population will start going through the same ageing process experienced by Europe.

Another important issue is the shortage of labour force in European countries, combined with the presence of a population on the southern shores of the Mediterranean that is very much available, but for whom it is difficult to find work and earn a living because of the European public's fears of inflows of immigrants and Europe's reluctance to consider itself as a land of immigration. Moreover, migrants established in the South are significantly less prepared to

migrate as there is not much hope of improving their situation in a short period of time in Southern countries. Those who manage to enter do not have much hope of seeing an improvement in their situation and would rather settle. There is therefore no mobility amongst the populations of the different countries, as has been experienced in the East since the fall of the Berlin wall, despite the fact that this is an essential component of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

The Balkans, (the northern Mediterranean) and Turkey, which should be considered as another coastal zone,

have not been mentioned at length. In the initial definition of the Barcelona Program, the main debate is between Europe and the South, especially the South West, as the Northern Southern border with Egypt, compared to that of its neighbours, is not considered to be at the centre of the dialogue between the North and the South. As per the Balkans, there has been a fundamental progress since the Yugoslavian crisis, Albania opening up, even though relatively since the fall of the Berlin wall, Turkey's progressing level of candidature to join the European Union and to meet the membership condi-

tions introduced by European countries. Turkey's entry in the European Union will represent a significant progress for the partnership, as it will eliminate a series of cultural obstacles such as the role of Islam in Europe, a partition which persists within the dialogue between the northern and southern coast. This country, which is neither Eastern nor Southern, would allow the widening of the representatives range. Countries in the Balkans are small, amongst which the main one is Greece with only 10 million habitants and not much influence in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.