

Presentation

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The Mediterranean is no longer the centre of the world as it was in Antiquity, but it has once again drawn international attention in 2006. More than any other region in the world, the Mediterranean region is faced with a major challenge in attaining an environment of peace, security and shared prosperity. Until it meets the challenge, the conflicts will continue to burden our ancient sea and drain its lifeblood. During the summer of 2006, the war in Lebanon clearly revealed a situation of concern regarding future evolution in the Middle East. Few signs invite optimism in the face of the radicalisation of positions in the region. The interrelated nature of conflicts in the Middle East requires a global perspective and the active participation of the International Community alongside the different parties in order to advance towards a solution, or at least contain the crisis and break the deadlock in economic and institutional processes. The European Union's commitment to an active role in the region, as demonstrated by its presence in post-war Lebanon, could be considered one of the year's few steps forward. In light of the situation in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East in 2006, the fourth edition of the Mediterranean Yearbook begins the section on key issues of the year with a contribution analysing the complex reality of the Middle East from different perspectives.

Med.2007 highlights other key issues of the year, beginning with African migrations, which reveal the need for cooperation between the European Union and African countries of migrant origin and transit to establish a Euro-Mediterranean strategy. Another

issue of decisive transcendence for the future of Euro-Mediterranean relations is energy, including the impact of oil prices, the perspectives of a rise in natural gas prices and the need to establish a truly Mediterranean dimension of European energy policy.

The Dossier of the current edition focuses on the knowledge society and its role in the social modernisation of the Mediterranean area. This section analyses the challenges and opportunities relating to the knowledge society in the Mediterranean Basin in a series of articles dealing with topics ranging from the production of knowledge to its role in development processes, not to mention aspects as important as the weight of education, university cooperation and the circulation of know-how through the Mediterranean area. Hence, the Yearbook analyses one of the facets that will certainly play a determining role for the future of human, social and economic development in the Mediterranean region.

As in previous editions, the Panorama section does not stop at topical issues but also offers an overview of the different aspects of the year through an analysis that covers political and business spheres, cultural aspects, development issues, security, partnership, cooperation and migration, with a variety of perspectives offered by over fifty authors from both northern and southern Mediterranean countries.

This fourth edition of the Mediterranean Yearbook is the result of collaboration between the Fundació CIDOB and the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed). The yearbook has become an essential vehicle for information on the situation in the Mediterranean area for both the experts and the most active political, economic and social actors, as well as for those who may be interested from among the general public. For both institutions, *Med.2007* represents the will to a sustained effort in information and analysis based on quality and the plurality of our contributors.