

The Barcelona Process Ten Years On. An Assessment from the Point of View of Civil Society

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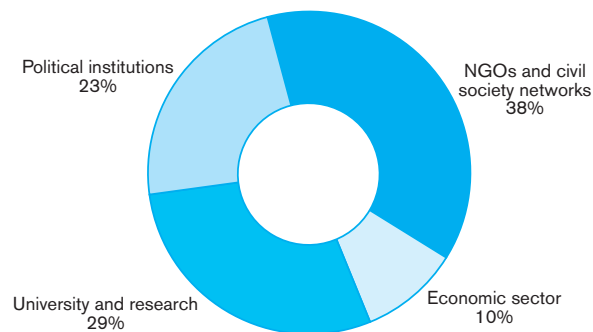
In order to find out the opinions held by the Euro-Mediterranean Association and the involvement of civil society in it, in 2005 the IEMed launched the Delphi survey entitled *Ten years of the Barcelona Process. The civil society's views*, to more than 2000 persons with knowledge about the region and the Euro-Mediterranean process. Bearing in mind the huge range of organisations and people who can claim they have participated in the Process over the past ten years (from a functional point of view) the assessment, according to a large number of people, is critical, but leaves room for optimism.

A Mobilization Exercise

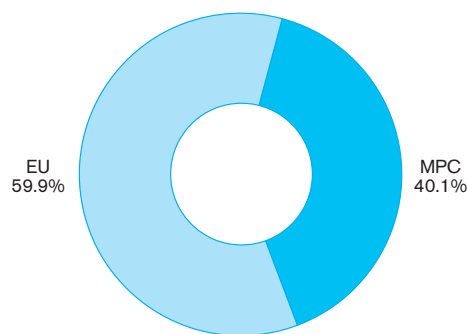
As the following graph shows, the majority of the responses are from people belonging to civil society, followed by universities and research institutes. The least represented sectors are those that, judging by the responses, have been insufficiently involved in the Barcelona Process: companies and trade unions. However, an analysis of responses by sector only reveals a more critical stance held by these two sectors towards the Process than the others. Elsewhere, there are no substantial differences.

One of the aims of the Survey was to produce an accurate representation of the countries in the south of the Mediterranean. Therefore, a special effort was made and the results were quite positive, since in spite of there being fewer

GRAPHIC 1 Distribution of Responses by Sector



GRAPHIC 2 Distribution of Responses by Geographical Area



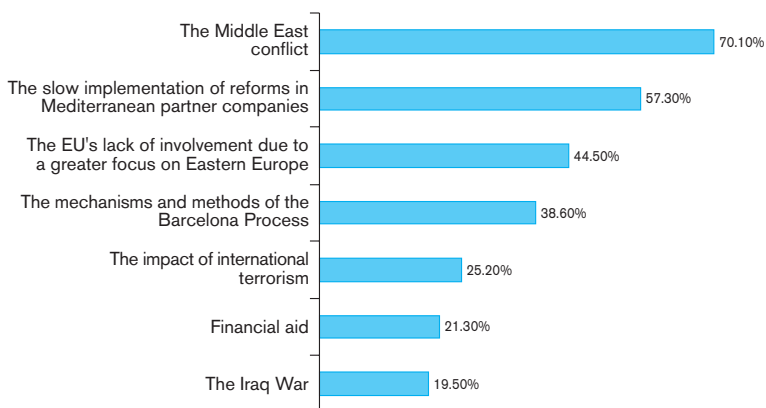
countries in this group, overall they represent more than 40% of the final responses.

Apart from the quantitative results, we must also highlight the considerable volume of textual responses received. The people questioned did not only give their opinion through closed, quantifiable responses, the majority also added their own written comments. This sets the survey apart from others and allows it to be used as a tool to mobilise opinion, since in most surveys the number of people who add their own comments is minimal.

Ten years of the Process: Critical Optimism

Ten years on since Barcelona, the impression about the results of this initiative, original in its approach and unique in its conception, is somewhat critical. On a scale of 1 (= very negative) to 10 (= very positive), the participants give the Barcelona Process a positive, although very critical, rating, with an average score of 5.6. The homogeneity between the responses from the south of the Mediterranean and from the northern shore is worthy of mention.

GRAPHIC 3 Causes of the Shortcomings of the Barcelona Process



As regards the question, What went wrong?, there is a first impression that relates to the level of involvement of Mediterranean society in the project. Although the survey was targeted at a majority who knew about and were involved to a certain degree in the Euro-Mediterranean project, this did not prevent them from being only moderately satisfied with the level of knowledge about the process: just over 5.4. In any case, visibility of the Euro-Mediterranean project in society, with a score of 3.6, is considered to be one of the subjects yet to be resolved. This situation will take on special significance in the immediate future due to the prospects of a new Neighbourhood Policy which may result in a dilution of the Partnership's role in more global strategies. The project appropriation effort involves participation from critical agents such as the media. In this regard, the survey includes an interesting revelation, i.e. that these civil society agents are those who, judging by the responses, have been less involved in the process: only 10% think that this has been sufficient

A second point refers to the project's political dimension. The need to provide the projects with political efficiency and solutions in the field of security is highlighted in the results obtained. Although none of the results in the three agendas, i.e. political, economic and social, have been analysed in depth, the score given to the aim of setting up a climate of peace and stability is certainly the lowest (less than 4 out of 10). Of course, the dramatic situations due to conflicts in this region and the irruption of glob-

al projects such as the G-8, approached from outside the Euro-Mediterranean context, have probably been the case of this deficiency in terms of opinion. However, the main causes of the failure to achieve the Process objectives include the deadlock in the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis, the slow implementation of reforms that should be introduced in countries on the southern shore, and the fact that, in the opinion of those polled, the Barcelona Process has not been sufficiently decisive so far in terms of democratic reforms or contribution to peace. On the other side of the coin, the perception of another project, Europe pre-occupied by another geographic area, i.e. the East, stands out. Almost 45% of those polled think that this may have resulted in a lack of interest towards the Mediterranean region. We must ask how a project such as the Euro-Mediterranean one, designed precisely to balance the opening up of the EU to the East, can have converged with this. Of course, paradoxically this assessment may continue in the medium-term within the European project. Likewise, new strategies regarding its neighbouring countries to the East and South (neighbourhood policies) clash with the internal incompatibilities of its own project due to recent debates about the EU constitution or financial issues. Finally, it is worth mentioning the shortcomings, agents and instruments aside, involved in the implementation of the process: almost half of the responses refer to the excessive opacity and complexity of mechanisms and work me-

thods. This is an interesting response if we bear in mind that critical issues such as financial aid are considered to be much less problematic. In this regard, we should point out an example that reveals the need for mechanisms. In the section on the assessment of EuroMeSCo proposals, two responses stand out: more than half of those polled point out the crucial need to set up result assessment mechanisms and a financing that is in keeping with the cohesion objective. Along the lines of distinguishing instrument mechanisms, we should mention that those polled view the MEDA programmes and association agreements as instruments that have significantly helped the Partnership.

The Human Dimension: a Key Contribution

If we start from the premise that the human dimension is present in all aspects of the Partnership, we will find an assessment that is positive in terms of interaction but poor in terms of measurable results. We must also highlight that most participants consider that the Barcelona Process is what it is, and is important in itself, largely due to the involvement of civil society.

The importance attached to cultural dialogue as a significant contribution of the EMP is clear. Those polled think that the Association has largely contributed to the setting up of networks of participants and consequently the reinforcement of civil society and their level of involvement in the Process. Therefore, the increase in exchanges has brought about greater knowledge regarding what is happening in Mediterranean societies, beyond the evolution of the political agenda.

Nonetheless, there is a feeling that the effective participation of these agents in the Association's institutional mechanisms has been insufficient or non-existent. The highest percentage of positive assessments regarding their participation comes from NGOs, political and specific meetings, think tanks and cultural institutions and foundations. The "notable absentees" among the group of participants are trade unions and companies, as well as the media.

Public territorial entities are also among those with the lowest level of participation.

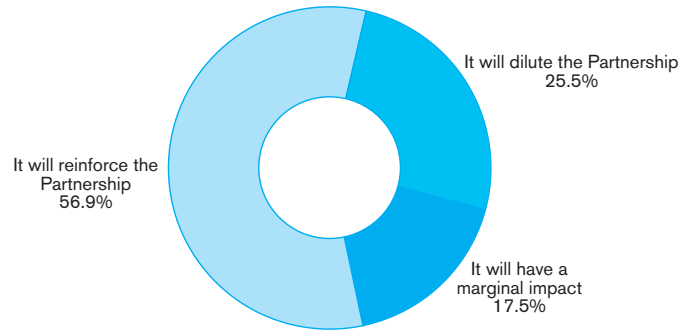
It is important to point out that the increasing complexity (and therefore wealth) of social coordination in the area and the needs of civil society agents who relate to each other through increasingly open and plural negotiation systems, require new instruments (conceptual and practical) for cooperation over the next few years (Solaniilla: 2005).

Future Intentions: Assets and Challenges of the Mediterranean Project

To the credit of the Mediterranean project, there is an overall feeling of plans and future prospects. This, together with the success of mobilising agents and setting up a climate for relations in the broadest terms, are the assets that those polled most value. The setting up of networks, the mobilisation of civil society and the fact of having contributed to mutual talks and knowledge, are the most frequent responses to questions about the project's most significant contributions. It is probably due to the same reason that the Partnership's own instruments are so highly valued (especially the Anna Lindh Foundation and the MEDA Programmes). It is not surprising then that most responses referring to priority actions to be taken by the Anna Lindh Foundation in the future highlight actions focussed on young persons. Of course, the outcome over these past ten years is an impression of privileged relationships between partners, the setting up of a climate of trust and, above all, real contact.

GRAPHIC 4

Assessment of the Neighbourhood Policy's Impact on the Barcelona Process



This human and relations dimension is also clear in the assessment given by NGOs, foundations and thematic networks as participants in the Euro-Mediterranean Process. As a result, the setting up of social instruments such as the Non-Governmental Platform is viewed in a positive light and there is pressure for it to play an institutional role in the Barcelona Process.

What are the main challenges in order to make the Mediterranean strategy feasible? We must point out three important areas from the responses: education, reforms and employment. These are the areas to which those polled gave the most priority respectively within the Partnership's three agendas: cultural and social, political and economic. We should also mention mobility, a sine qua non for a truly competitive environment in the future, which stands out transversally and in various responses.

Future scenarios mainly point to the need for a Mediterranean project that considers, in the long-term, diversity and social models shared by both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. Another aspect to be taken into account is the

Neighbourhood Policy, considered to be a potential reinforcement for the Partnership by most of those polled, but which must also accommodate for the increasingly-popular idea of an internal Euro-Mediterranean policy and for the reinforcement of local powers. We should also mention the project's centrality and the need to maintain an open regional structure, which in the case of the Maghreb mainly refers to the need to move beyond the bilateral context and establish subregional agreements.

References

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- SOLANILLA, Pau: "Governança i societat civil". La cooperació de dimensió humana. Balanç i perspectives de la cooperació descentralitzada entre les col·lectivitats locals euromediterrànies. Diputació de Barcelona, Barcelona, September 2005.