

Can the Institutionalisation of a Parliamentary Dimension Breathe New Life into the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership?

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The inaugural session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) took place in March 2004. In the Declaration of Barcelona, the partner states agreed the need to encourage “*contacts between parliamentarians*.” As a specific and practical measure, the European Parliament was invited “*to take the initiative with other parliaments to launch the future Euro-Mediterranean parliamentary dialogue which could enable elected representatives of the various partners to go ahead with exchanges of views on a vast range of subjects*.” So, the Partnership was invited to evolve towards an association of states providing a double dimension: the inter-governmental and the inter-parliamentary. With the inter-parliamentary dimension it was thought that a new space would be opened up for building trust, together with a dynamic for dialogue transcending the intergovernmental dimension. In fact, through the parliaments, it is Mediterranean civil societies which are holding a dialogue. The call by the Barcelona Conference gave rise to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum, set up in 1998. Following the recommendation of the European Parliament and the conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Valencia (April 2002),¹ calling for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean

Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), the Forum which met in Bari (June 2002) set up a working group charged with preparing this new structure.² As a result of two series of meetings held in February and October 2003, internal debates and opinions submitted by the national parliaments in response to a questionnaire, the working group came to an agreement on the “essential parameters” of the future Assembly, allowing the Forum to submit its recommendations for the creation of the EMPA to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Naples (2 December 2003), which approved them.³ In establishing the EMPA, the Conference declared it was convinced that the Assembly will contribute to greater visibility and transparency for the Barcelona Process, as well as relaunching it. Would inter-parliamentary co-operation be the new challenge that the Barcelona Process would have to take up? What would be the specific role of the inter-parliamentary dimension with respect to the inter-governmental? What are its contributions to classical diplomacy? How does EMPA encourage the visibility and transparency of the Barcelona Process, knowing that in certain States the parliaments are not actually independent of the executive? To try to answer these questions, it would be useful to assess the state of play and record the emergence of a parliamentary dimension in the political and security dialogue in the Mediterranean. It would then be useful to measure the actual powers

given to the EMPA. Finally, it is a good idea to consider the specific contribution of the inter-parliamentary dimension to the inter-governmental as regards the Barcelona Process.

The emergence of parliamentary diplomacy in Euro-Mediterranean relations

The development of the parliamentary dimension in international relations is one of the gains of globalisation and the spread of democratic values. The Mediterranean region has not escaped this historic process, which has seen the emergence of a parliamentary dimension as a complement or support to the inter-governmental one. Some initiatives aiming at inter-parliamentary dialogue in the Mediterranean have been taken within the WEU, the OSCE and the Inter-parliamentary Union.

So, the WEU Assembly, turned into the *European Interim Assembly for Security and Defence*, has organised several working sessions and produced reports concerning security in the Mediterranean seen from a Parliamentary approach.⁴ Since 1995, the OSCE parliamentary assembly has, for its part, launched an inter-parliamentary dialogue with six *Mediterranean Partners* (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia). It regularly organises seminars allowing exchanges between parliamentarians from both shores. The role of the Inter-

¹ See the Valencia Action Plan, Chapter V on institutional arrangements.

² Final declaration of the 4th Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum, Bari (Italy), 17-18 June 2002.

³ Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers, Conclusions of the Presidency, Naples (2-3 December 2003).

⁴ See Relations between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean: conclusions of the Lisbon Seminar. European Interim Security and Defence Assembly, Report presented in the name of the Political Committee by Mr Yanez BARNUEVO, Reporter, Doc. A/1806, 48th session, 4 December 2002.

parliamentary Union (IPU), which gave rise to the Inter-parliamentary Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), will be mentioned elsewhere. The CSCM has, until now, held four meetings, of which the latest, at Nafplion (February 2005) decided to transform the CSCM process into a Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.⁵

From this state of play of the inter-parliamentary co-operation networks in the Mediterranean, we can already make two observations. Although these different instances are a considerable framework for political dialogue and an exchange of views, their multiplicity and involvement in concurrent areas raise the question of how specific they are. In other words, the inflation of instances of dialogue in the Mediterranean is a factor for confusion and inter-institutional concurrence which raises the question of the specific nature of each of these structures. At the same time, the concurrence of instances of inter-parliamentary co-operation does have positive effects. The numerous instances involved in inter-parliamentary co-operation in the region are a considerable framework for political dialogue and exchange of views on the regional situation.

Another limitation lies in the fact that these instances are not the places where decisions are made to determine security, stability and co-operation in the Mediterranean, as the operation of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum has illustrated.⁶ In fact, within the framework of the Forum's meetings, the parliamentarians are restricted to debating the main issues on the agenda and exchanging their views on the Barcelona Process, their conclusions being then passed on to their national parliaments and to their foreign ministers. But work within the Forum has also enabled the concerns of parliamentarians in the region to be measured. These concerns involve the difficulties of putting into practice the three chapters of the Bar-

celona Process. The southern parliamentarians have repeated their worries about the implications of the enlargement of the EU to the east, the Middle East conflict, Iraq, the consequences of the free trade area, immigration and the freedom of circulation of people (visas), the malfunctioning of the MEDA programmes, the weight of debt, insufficiency of investments and capital flows. As for northern parliamentarians, their concerns have involved respect for human rights and good governance, the struggle against illegal immigration, organised crime and terrorism, political and economic reforms and South-South integration (AMU).

Will the transformation of the Forum into an Assembly allow it to provide answers to these deficits?

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly: a deliberative and consultative power

Following the mandate granted to it by the Declaration of Barcelona, the European Parliament laid down some criteria for setting up a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. The Parliament, which repeatedly denounces the deficits of the Barcelona Process concerning human rights,⁷ considers that the creation of the Assembly is likely to generate a new dynamic, giving rise to specific changes concerning the situation in this area. For this reason, the Parliament is asking that the new Assembly should take an active part in the debate on the progress of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).⁸ The European Parliament conceives EMPA as a control, evaluation, recommendation and action body on the achievement of the objectives of the Barcelona Process and, in particular, on the appropriate implementation of the Association Agreements. This conception of a dynamic and active role for the

Assembly is clearly not shared by most governments, attached to a pre-eminent executive and to the inter-governmental dimension of the Barcelona Process.

The opening session of the EPMA was held in Athens in March 2004, in the course of which it elected its President and its Bureau.⁹ At the instance of the Forum, the EMPA is organising its work in the spirit of the three chapters of the Barcelona Process, based on three Parliamentary committees which it established in Brussels in September 2004 (the political, security and human rights committee; the economic, financial, social affairs and education committee; the promotion of quality of life, human exchange and culture committee).

Parity governs the composition of the EMPA: there are 240 members equally representing the parliaments of the European Union and the parliaments of the Mediterranean partner countries. The ten Mediterranean countries are represented by 120 members. The national parliaments of the twenty-five European Union countries are represented by 75 members, to which are added 45 members from the European Parliament. The Assembly's Bureau is made up of four members, two belonging to Mediterranean partner countries and two to the European component (including a member of the European Parliament). This is not ground-breaking, because the ACP-European Union Partnership already has a Parliamentary assembly with parity. This is made up of representatives of 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and 79 MEPs, forming the Contonou Convention "Parliament," which links the ACP states and those of the European Union.

The "essential parameters" of the EMPA adopted by the Forum stipulate that it has a consultative role on all Partnership matters. It ensures the monitoring of the application of the Association Agreements. It adopts resolutions and addresses recommendations to the ministerial conference. Concerning this, two limit-

⁵ The inaugural meeting of this new Assembly is planned for Jordan during the second half of 2005.

⁶ The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum was set up in October 1998 in Brussels as an informal and *ad hoc* framework for political dialogue between the national parliaments of countries taking part in the Barcelona Process, as well as the European Parliament.

⁷ See Resolution of the European Parliament on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, doc. P5_TA(2003)0518, 20 November 2003.

⁸ Resolution of the European Parliament on the initiative intended to give a new impulse to actions undertaken by the European Union in the area of human rights and democratisation, in co-operation with the Mediterranean partners. P5_TA-PROV(2004)0099. B5-0049/2004.

⁹ In March 2005, Egypt is to host the second session of the EMPA.

ations appear in the EMPA's powers, concerning the means of making decisions and their legal scope.

Concerning the rules governing decision-making, the Assembly must adopt its propositions by consensus. However, it is later indicated that it has the power "to examine ways to adopt any texts that it may consider necessary." It is clear that at the instance of the other organs of the Barcelona Process is the rule, but this does hark back to granting a *de facto* right of veto to each state. The power to adopt other decision-making methods (voting) is in fact a theoretical one because putting it into practice requires the agreement of everyone, which appears hypothetical in the current context. Always adopted by consensus, the resolutions reflect the lowest common denominator on the big Partnership issues.

In addition, the Assembly's deliberations will not be legally binding. Here we are in the realm of "soft law" concerned with deliberative bodies; the EMPA adopting resolutions with the value of recommendations and not decisions. So, the EMPA has very theoretical powers subject to consideration at the Ministerial Conference, which remains the framework where decisions about the Partnership are taken.

What is the link with the existing institutions of the Barcelona Process? The Parliamentary Forum invited the Ministerial Conference and the Assembly to establish a "formal link," maintaining their specific nature and independence. Mutual representation at respective meetings is one of the links envisaged. Another important link lies in the opportunity given to the EMPA to submit opinions to the Ministerial Conference. It is true, however, that there is nothing compelling the Conference to follow these opinions. The EMPA must be a framework for recommendations and propositions with a view to improving the Barcelona Process. Otherwise it would risk being nothing more than an association of parliaments from the region. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe could, in this respect, form a model because it

is a sufficiently flexible structure to preserve national sovereignties, but sufficiently structured to be a framework for debate and fruitful exchange.

Ultimately, the EMPA must be really representative, with representation from all parliaments in the region. In effect, it seems that certain national parliaments are still reticent to participate in the new institution's activities.

What is the contribution of parliamentarians to the Barcelona Process?

It must be stated that the Barcelona Process's achievements are quite modest, if, of course, the Association Agreement strand is excluded: seminars for training diplomats, networks of foreign policy institutes (EuroMeSCo), co-operation between the civil protection services in the case of natural or man-made disasters, creation of a record of bilateral agreements, exchange of information about international conventions in the fields of human rights, disarmament and humanitarian law. The persistence of the Middle Eastern conflict, the disagreement between the partners on basic issues (human rights, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction) or the insufficiency of MEDA budgets for aiding the southern countries are among the counter-productive factors.

The parliamentarians must make themselves advocates of the Partnership as regards their governments by pushing initiatives in this field and by supporting and feeding the debate on the Barcelona Process. This Process concerns a range of issues diverse enough to allow action by parliamentary agents in support of governmental agents: the fight against terrorism, organised crime, narcotics trafficking, environmental degradation, xenophobia, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

The agreement between parliamentarians allows this or that initiative or position to be tested outside more binding classical diplomatic action and new ideas

to be tossed around beyond the official constraints of inter-governmental meetings. It is clear that as Parliaments cannot, for the moment, be the place where decisions are directly taken regarding the adoption of partnership measures, it does not simply remain for them to be forums for discussion and debate allowing elements to be identified with a view to future agreements. Inter-parliamentary exchanges would also allow taboos to be lifted more easily on sensitive issues like disarmament. In addition, the exploratory work of parliamentarians can facilitate subsequent decision-making by governments. The inter-parliamentary dimension can therefore "boost" and "relaunch" the inter-governmental one.¹⁰ In practice, one might imagine regular meetings between the foreign affairs and defence committees of the parliaments in the region to discuss issues of common concern including the deep causes of the instability and tensions affecting the region. This would form one of the preventive diplomacy mechanisms that the region cruelly lacks. In effect, inter-parliamentary instances are places where the parties can express themselves more freely and give opinions to governments on ways of managing crises, offering their good offices to the parties in a dispute.

So, inter-parliamentary co-operation opens up a new space for creating trust and a dynamic of dialogue. Finally, through the parliamentarians, Mediterranean civil society can in fact undertake a frank exchange on all its concerns and aspirations and seek the means to respond to them. Because of their rich experience, the parliaments of European countries can make a notably useful contribution to the development of democratic institutions in the southern countries. The exchange of experiences in this area is crucial, but these exchanges must avoid all forms of paternalism. Ultimately, it is a question of strengthening mutual co-operation and combating misperceptions and stereotypes fed by an irrational view of others.

¹⁰ See Abdelwahab Biad, "Los parlamentos como nuevos actores del partenariado: hacia una diplomacia parlamentaria en el Mediterráneo," *Agora Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, N°8, 2003.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF THE EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

One of the elements highlighted by the analysts of the Barcelona Process is the difficulty in carrying out an assessment of the true effects produced by the projects developed within this framework.

The annex to the annual report produced by the European Commission on development policy and external assistance* during 2003 includes a methodological analysis of interest on the indicators which permit the success of EU cooperation worldwide to be weighed up. At the end of 2002, the evaluation unit carried out a three-year long evaluation methodology plan.

Amongst the first findings, evaluation at geographical level indicates certain keys for the evaluation of cooperation with the Mediterranean countries: this has high relevance and reasonably good general effectiveness, despite being limited due to the lack of policies which confront main economic weaknesses. Serious ineffectiveness is revealed in the management, which is transformed into delays and interrup-

tions. The Commission is therefore advised to help partners in the identification of strengths and weaknesses in social and economic development and use elements such as the creation of new financial instruments or decentralisation.

On the other hand, it is recognised that access to external financing on the part of small and medium-sized ventures is resolved through a varied range of initiatives which are not interconnected. The promotion of business was the main sector of the regional projects.

On the whole, from the EU's point of view, it seems that the projects related to the Mediterranean area present a reasonably good average assessment in comparison with other geographical areas and are only exceeded by Latin America.

Five criteria are used for the assessment: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. In general the results for the Mediterranean area are good as they are above the average in all criteria.

The relevance of a project is measured by the number of people it affects and the needs of these people. In this section, the report indicates that one of the main obstacles comes from the delay in the development of the projects which can make them inappropriate. The most ambitious they are the more difficulties they present and the more they lack capacity for adaptation.

Efficiency is measured in adapting the development of the project to planned deadlines and although reaching the required average (2.5) for their positive assessment, this is the weakest indicator, and it is therefore necessary to set more realistic deadlines.

Effectiveness considers to what extent the project represents an increase in wellbeing in people's lives. This was the most successful indicator during 2003. Furthermore, the report points out that the projects usually play a catalytic role in improvements in the least tangible elements, such as local participation or strengthening of communities.

The report admits the difficulty in evaluating the impact of the project.

Finally, the sustainability of the project has diverse dimensions. Whilst from the environmental, sociocultural and technological viewpoint, the Commission considers that the results are positive, this is not the case for financial sustainability, given that the nonexistent monitoring with the local counterparts after the project is completed provokes, if not a loss of the benefits gained, a reduction in the rate at which these are produced.

TABLE 9 Average assessment of the projects by monitoring and programme criteria

Average assessment 2003	TACIS	CARDS	MED	ACP	Asia	LA	Average per criterion
Relevance	2.63	2.61	2.85	2.59	2.68	2.94	2.68
Efficiency	2.60	2.60	2.69	2.47	2.55	2.62	2.56
Effectiveness	2.75	2.60	2.85	2.61	2.71	2.91	2.72
Impact	2.78	2.49	2.82	2.57	2.59	2.90	2.70
Sustainability	2.83	2.46	2.87	2.52	2.60	2.92	2.70
Average per programme	2.72	2.55	2.82	2.55	2.63	2.86	2.67

* (COM (2004) 536 final) http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/reports/COMM_PDF_COM_2004_0536_F_EN_ACTE.pdf