

The Mediterranean Regions in an Enlarged European Union: A New Centrality

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Ever since the Treaty of Rome set up in 1957, the Mediterranean regions of the European Union have felt and expressed a sense of marginalisation in the face of the engine of European construction, represented by the Lotharingian group. First felt by the Mezzogiorno of Italy and the south of France, this feeling was relayed in the 1980s through the regions of Greece, and then those of Spain and Portugal. The listlessness of the relationship with the opposite shore of the Mediterranean has further contributed to the sentiment.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, this situation is perhaps undergoing such sweeping change for three reasons.

Internal Economic Progress

The primer of the structural policies on aid for regional development in the 1970s, and their new importance following the Delors 1 Package (1989) have unquestionably created a new dynamic in development in by far the majority of the regions in southern Europe. With growth rates of four to five percent a year over a period of ten to fifteen years, these countries have caught up in many areas of infrastructure, accomplished the emergence of a strongly internationalised economic fabric, improved the skills of their labour forces, and ensured much of their

opening up to the rest of the world. Much still remains to be done, of course – justifying the pursuit of European solidarity mechanisms for the benefit of their competitiveness – but the achievements of the last thirty years demonstrate their participation in a new geography of the EU, which now has an increased number of centres.

This progress puts the Mediterranean regions in a better position to play an important part in contributing to the overall effort being made for the future of Europe. It gives them the necessary legitimacy to participate actively in the discussion on the future policies of the EU, which aim to work toward achieving the goals on competitiveness established at Lisbon and the targets on sustainable development agreed at Göteborg.

This result is due, first of all, to the effort of these regions' own populations and of their political, economic and administrative leaders, without whom any external support would have amounted to nothing. The small number of examples to the contrary in fact bears witness to the others' endeavours and should not taint the otherwise satisfactory outcome. We would wager that the few areas of failure will no longer be prepared to remain behind.

It is in this context that the proposal of the Convention to include in the EU Constitution the principle of «territorial cohesion» – thereby complementing the economic and social cohesion included in the Single European Act of 1986 – offers these regions a new legal basis that will benefit a balanced development in Europe. It is in this same spirit that, within the Interreg programme, the Mediterranean regions have enthusiastically set about

preparing a Scheme for Developing the European Mediterranean Space within the framework of the Mediterranean Workshops for Regional Development.

The Opening-up of the Institutions

This new economic situation would undoubtedly never have come about without the far-reaching institutional reforms that have taken place in the involved states. To a greater or lesser degree, depending on the political history of each of these states, ambitious measures have been put in place to strengthen regional authorities – the autonomous communities in Spain, radical decentralisation in Italy, the early phase of decentralisation in France, and administrative devolution in Greece and Portugal – thereby giving the political leaders closest to their people the means to act and to stimulate development. There are still further steps to be taken, but in most cases, the Mediterranean regions now have nothing to fear from a comparison of their institutions with their equivalents in northern Europe. The capacity for regional initiative has largely been opened up, and existing statutes can serve as models.

In addition, the Mediterranean regions have been able to play the part of active contributors to the work done by the Convention for the Future of Europe, ensuring that the regional level is recognised as one of the formal players of the EU, while respecting the constitutional norms of each of the member states, to the extent that this proposition appears, in particular in its Article 5. As a result, the practice

UNITED BY THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE REGIONS REQUESTING A ROLE IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP

During the autumn of 2003, the Italian Presidency of the European Union, together with the Italian regions, organised five meetings to which were invited the regional authorities from the EU member states and the candidate countries, as well as neighbouring Mediterranean countries. In these meetings several different aspects related to the European and Mediterranean regions were debated in addition to the possibility of their potential as contributors to the Barcelona Process, with a view to the sixth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers held on 2nd and 3rd December 2003 in Naples.

The first four meetings were organised by Italian regions in order to deal with the following issues:

- Interregional Partnership in the Neighbourhood Policy: The Mediterranean and the Balkans (Ancona [Marche], 17/18-10-03)
- Migratory Policies and Interregional Partnership (Bari [Apulia], 23/25-10-03)
- Interregional Partnership and Mediterranean Cultural Heritage (Palermo [Sicily], 14/15-11-03)

- Cooperation between Local Authorities as a Factor of Stabilisation in the Prospective of the Peace Process in the Middle East (Perugia [Umbria], 19-11-03)

The conclusions of the first four meetings focused on the institutional capacity of the regions to contribute interregional and transborder integration policies in the Mediterranean basin. On 27th and 28th November 2003 the last meeting was called in Palermo (Sicily) entitled «United by the Mediterranean». The Palermo meeting aimed to complement the more sectoral work of the first four meetings with a more political objective, producing a final declaration that brought together the most outstanding conclusions of the joint work carried out in these five meetings. The final document of the Palermo meeting was delivered to the participants in the sixth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers (Naples, 2/3-12-03).

In the document recording the conclusions approved at the end of the process, the participants call for a greater participation of the

local and regional authorities in the Partnership and respect for subsidiarity in the procedures of programming and management of the neighbourhood programmes. Special emphasis is also given to the importance of the Mediterranean for the whole of the European Union. Among the specific proposals, that of requesting the creation of a body of regional and local representation within the Euro-Mediterranean institutional framework particularly stands out. In order to guarantee the monitoring of their demands, the representatives of the regions launched a contact group for the Mediterranean territorial government bodies in charge of both the monitoring of the Barcelona Process and specific issues in relation to the sectoral or transborder issues.

Further information:

<http://www.regione.sicilia.it/eventi/unitimediterraneo.htm>

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of subsidiarity will not be confined to the relationship between Brussels and the member states, but will become fully meaningful as a result of its extension to regional and local levels. This vitality in the Mediterranean regions' participation is also evident within the Convention itself and at the time of the work of the Committee of the Regions, or through the networks of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) or the regions with legislative powers, to which Claudio Martini, President of Tuscany, has made an invaluable contribution. It is extremely likely in my view that the regions will be active participants in the Territorial Dialogue being set up by the European Commission, which will cover everything concerning European policies with any significant territorial impact.

The Responsibility of Neighbourhood

With the accession of ten new member states on 1st May 2004, and the emerging prospects in the south-east of Europe, from the Balkans to Turkey, the EU is taking a major step forward,

as reflected in the European Commission's communications in January and July 2003. For the first time, it has become aware of its borders, in its proposition of a policy of special relations with its neighbours to the south and to the east.

At that point, the European Mediterranean has ceased to be the confines of a locked-in Community and has become the lead player in a new relationship with the EU's neighbours.

This was the long-standing and farsighted wish of the Mediterranean regions in the EU, though the dominant political context has not, until now, made its realisation possible. From the Summit of the Regions, hosted by Jordi Pujol – former President of the Generalitat of Catalonia – in Barcelona, to the work done by the Mediterranean Inter-regional Workshops, this willingness has been constantly manifested in recent years, and is in keeping today with the new geopolitical dynamic of the EU through two areas of action.

Firstly, we must do everything possible to ensure that the integration of the new members of the EU is successful. The Mediterranean regions have a particular responsibility vis-à-vis Rumania,

Bulgaria, Turkey, Albania and the states that were once part of the former Yugoslavia. Many Mediterranean regions, including Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Tuscany and the Marches are already providing practical aid to the Balkan states. For its part, the CPMR is contributing through its geographical commissions on the Balkans and the Black Sea, where its Greek and Italian member regions are heavily involved. Secondly, we need to specify in greater detail the perspectives for co-operation with the regions of the states on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Many regions, such as Catalonia, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Sicily, Murcia, the Languedoc-Roussillon and Andalusia, already do this on an individual basis. The status of associate member of the CPMR has been established, and Moroccan and Tunisian regions, such as Susah and Tangier-Tetouan, have already signed up.

The project of the European Commission to create a single instrument that will serve as the legal basis for neighbourly cooperation should at last make it possible to give substance to practical multilateral actions without Kafkaesque concern over the compatibility

of the various different resources available amongst the internal mechanisms of the EU, such as Interreg, or external programmes such as MEDA or pre-accession measures.

In order to give substance to these approaches, there is still a need for the regions, which are extremely knowledgeable in the matter of cooperation, to be closely involved in the preparation and

implementation of cooperative ventures, as proposed by the Committee of the Regions at the behest of the president of the autonomous community government of Andalusia, Manuel Chávez.

TABLE 11 Main Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation agreements

	Members	Date of constitution
ASCAME (Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Mediterranean)	All the chambers of commerce of the cities of the Mediterranean basin are members. The members of the Bureau are the following countries: Algeria, France, Spain, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey and Italy.	1st October 1982
Four Motors for Europe	Catalonia, Rhône-The Alps, Lombardy and Baden-Württemberg	1986
Mediterranean Technology Arc	Valencian Community, Catalonia, Murcia, The Balearic Islands, Provence-the Alps-the Côte d'Azur and Tuscany	1990
C6	Barcelona, Montpellier, Palma de Mallorca, Toulouse, Valencia and Saragossa	1991
CRPM Inter.-Mediterranean Commission	The Inter-Mediterranean Commission is formed by forty regions: Famagusta, Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Catalonia, the Valencian Community, La Rioja, Melilla, Murcia, Corsica, Languedoc-Roussillon, the Midi-Pyrénées, Provence- the Alps- the Côte d'Azur, Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki, Attiki, Dytiki Ellada, Dytiki Makedonia, Ionia Nisia, Ipiros, Kentriki Makedonia, Kriti, Notio Aigaio, Peloponnissos, Sterea Ellada, Thessaly, Voreio Aigaio, Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Lacio, Liguria, Las Marcas, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany, Umbria, Alentejo, Algarve, Gozo, Sousse, Tangiers-Tetuán.	CRPM: 1973 Inter-Mediterranean Commission: 1991
Euroregion	Catalonia, Languedoc-Roussillon and the Midi-Pyrénées	1991
IMEDOC or Group of Western Mediterranean Islands	The Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia	1995
Latin Arc Association	Formed by fifty-six members, including: Spanish provincial governments, French departments, Italian provinces and Portuguese regions.	20th June 2002, but its activity started in 1999

Source: Secretariat for Foreign Relations. Generalitat of Catalonia.

COOPERATION BETWEEN CITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Euromediterranean Committee on Eurocities

- EUROMED PACTE (Partnership, Action, Cooperation and Transfer of Experience), the main activity of the Euromed Committee for the period spanning 2002 - 2007. The programme establishes eight fields of action by way of stable contexts for cooperation: reinforcing local governance; urban mobility; sustainable management of the urban environment; culture and heritage; development strategies for towns and cities; new information and communication technologies as a tool for local development; social cohesion in towns and cities and town planning and housing.

MedCities

MedCities was created in 1991 with a view to experiences and know-how related to the urban environment and sustainable development being exchanged between coastal Mediterranean cities. The projects that began and/or were carried out during 2003 include:

- Urban mobility plan in Sousse (Tunisia). Sousse City Council, the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona as a representative of

MedCities, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, the Tunisian Agency for Renewable Energy, Consulting Formaplan S.L.

- Mediterranean Urban Waste Management Project (MUWMP). This consists of three pilot projects, in Alexandria, Limassol and Zarqa. The experience and results obtained will have positive implications for the entire area. The Barcelona City Council provided technical assistance for the Alexandria subplan. Experts from Rome and Calvia worked on the Limassol subplan, while Rome City Council and international NGOs oversaw that of Zarqa.
- Improvement plan in Tetouan's Koraat Sbaa district. Pilot programme backed by Cities Alliance, Moroccan institutions and Barcelona City Council.
- Plan for improving air quality, mobility and the creation of air control laboratories (SMAP). Larnaca, Limassol, Tetouan and the urban community of Al-Fayhaa (Tripoli, Al-Mina and Al-Baddawui, Lebanon) are participating in this initiative, along with MedCities. The project is being led by the

Catalan Energy Institute (ICAEN), with financing from the European Commission.

- Urban waste management project in Maghreb and Mashreq countries (METAP). Adoption of sustainable waste management methods in Algiers, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Palestine. Debates and exchanges began in the summer of 2003 as part of the MUWMP (see above).

Standing Committee for the Euromediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM)

The COPPEM was created in Gaza in July 2000, on the initiative of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Arab Town Organisation. Its goal is to foster decentralised cooperation between cities, towns, local authorities and regions, as well as to promote the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration. The projects that are undertaken are mainly funded as part of the European Commission's MEDA programme.

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