

# Foreword

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When we said a year ago that despite the pandemic we could face the future with moderate optimism, little did we imagine that this window of hope would be so short. The multiple challenges and tensions in the region have been compounded by the war in Ukraine, which has aggravated an already very delicate situation. The effect of the war in the region is leading to economic difficulties, energy supply issues in Europe and food supply problems in the southern Mediterranean countries, some of which are heavily dependent on Ukrainian cereals.

In this situation, the region's existing problems and challenges are becoming more strained and fractured, multiplying and becoming more acute. The Mediterranean area is facing multiple issues that can hardly be addressed without comprehensive co-operation... Climate change, populism, authoritarian reaction, the economic crisis, the consequences of the pandemic, geopolitical tensions, migration, the wars in Syria and Libya, the urgent need for an energy transition, environmental conflicts, employment, the tourism crisis, the need to manage supply chains, the challenges of informal employment, environmental risks... These are multiple challenges that cannot be ignored and that are directly or indirectly aggravated by the war in Ukraine, which has focalized international attention.

In light of these events, the Yearbook has redefined its table of contents to accommodate the different foci of media attention without neglecting the substantive issues that, although of less media interest, will undoubtedly shape the future of the Mediterranean area.

The Keys section of this edition consists of four chapters in which various articles analyse some of the chief factors of the situation in the region. The first of the Keys is devoted, unsurprisingly, to geopolitical changes and the realignment of alliances against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. It examines the effects of the war on the Euro-Mediterranean area, geopolitical transformations in the Middle East and the role of three countries that are important players in the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Mediterranean: Qatar, Iran and Turkey, to whom the war in Ukraine has lent the opportunity to assume a mediating role after a period of multiple tensions in the region.

The second of the Keys focuses on one of the fundamental aspects for the future, not only of the region but also of the planet: energy and the green transition. The war in Ukraine has clearly revealed the EU's energy dependence on Russia and the need to diversify energy imports on the one hand; and on the other, it has put a spoke in the wheel of the energy transition by forcing some countries to revert to highly polluting energy production in order to meet their energy needs. With the effects of climate change at our doorstep, it is essential to address the issue of energy in the Mediterranean. Three articles examine the geopolitical tensions of energy, the challenges of clean energy, decarbonization and alternative energies, and finally, the financing of energy transition commitments.

The third of the Keys deals with the future of politics in the Arab world. Firstly, political dynamics are analysed, with the resurgence of authoritarianism in the form of a technocratic populism that is eroding political parties, which had already begun their downfall with the decline of ideology among the population. It also discusses the role of elites in the counter-revolution and in the consolidation of authoritarianism in southern Mediterranean countries.

The last of the Keys focuses on some of the gaps that hinder regional integration in the Mediterranean. Four of these problems are explored in different articles: the urgent need for improved Euro-Mediterranean cooperation; the impact of the growing external debt in the region's countries; tensions in the Maghreb and their impact on Europe; and finally, the issue of migration in the Mediterranean, a major factor in relations between the two shores. The cost and implications of managing the EU's borders will largely determine relations with its neighbouring countries.

In its desire to go beyond current affairs to address in-depth issues of extreme importance for the future of the region, the Dossier in this edition of the Yearbook is dedicated to social policies and the challenges to improving well-being in Mediterranean countries.

As usual, the Dossier approaches the subject from different perspectives. It thus deals with the demographic situation in the Mediterranean, with completely different age structures on the two shores that determine the social policy needs in each country. It also covers classic welfare issues such as the situation of social services in southern Mediterranean countries and the fight against poverty, the functioning of the health systems and the need to improve them, the need for a safe environment and sustainable management of resources, and job creation and innovation as key elements of social development and the promotion of welfare societies. But it also addresses such issues as inequalities – not only economic, but also generational, gender and educational – as elements that hinder development and well-being, and the importance of cities and municipal cooperation in this development. Finally, it also analyses how citizens' expectations and aspirations determine individual well-being, not only from the point of view of mere economic aspirations, but also including political or identity-related expectations associated with the concept of citizens' dignity.

As in previous editions, the selection of articles is rounded off by the Panorama section, which presents a general overview of the most relevant issues in the region through 35 short articles. The first subsection, organized geographically, contains articles focusing on different Mediterranean countries that offer a glimpse of the main challenges they face. Among them, the articles on the serious situation in Lebanon and one on the political scenario in Tunisia are particularly noteworthy. Also included are articles on external actors such as Sudan, European defence and the accession process of the Balkan countries.

The second subsection under Panorama, organized thematically, reflects the Yearbook's will to tackle as wide a range of topics as possible. Thus, this section covers subjects ranging from the arms race in terms of drones and conflicts over water, to the role of social networks in the fight for women's rights, the configuration of extremism and the instrumentalization of migration as a threat, not to mention the informal economy, employment, value chains and the role of cities in Mediterranean integration.

Finally, the second part of the Yearbook contains the annexes. Composed of chronologies, statistics, graphs and maps, the annexes are the counterpoint to the articles. The variety and breadth of the information and data supplied in the annexes make up a huge repository of information which is updated edition after edition. These annexes are an essential tool for understanding the reality of the Mediterranean based on a selection of information and indicators that provide insight into different aspects of the situation in each of the Mediterranean countries.

This latest edition of the Yearbook, the nineteenth, upholds the IEMed's commitment to disseminating knowledge about the Mediterranean region. The Yearbook supplies those interested in the Mediterranean with a compendium of articles and information covering the widest possible thematic diversity and a variety of perspectives, ensured by the large number of authors that have contributed to this and previous editions.