

20 Years of the Barcelona Process: what future for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership?

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The European Union is facing a new challenge regarding its neighbourhood policy for the coming years. Internal and external threats have arisen in the last twenty years and have disrupted the European Union strategy. These interferences have increased the distance between the inherited values and beliefs of the founding fathers and the real possibilities of action of the European Union towards its neighbours.

The history of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), created in 1989, goes hand in hand with Euro-Mediterranean Policy itself. When analysing the evolution of this twenty years, there are three major dates. These dates, worth to be highlighted, could be considered as major turning points not only in the history of the Euro-Mediterranean Policy but also regarding IEMed itself.

Three major dates for the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation

The first date to bear in mind is of course 1995, the twentieth anniversary of which is being commemorated in 2015. Until that year, there had practically been no European policy on the Mediterranean region. However, the well-known pact between Felipe González and Helmut Kohl at the Cannes Summit enabled an agreement of all European leaders, which resulted in the beginning of a major European policy on the East in exchange for a major policy on the South. It was the birth of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with the start of the Barcelona Process. The Euro-Mediterranean policy proposed in 1995 focused on the development of the South and East of the Mediterranean.

However, to achieve this objective it was necessary to count on all the strength and capacities of the European Union. While German reunification and the community enlargement proposal sought to move the border between Western Europe and the Russian troops 1,000 km towards the East by incorporating those countries into the European Community world, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership proposed shifting the border of underdevelopment, poverty and instability that horizontally crosses the Mediterranean 1,000 km towards the South, integrating the Maghreb and Middle East countries, as well as Turkey and Israel, into the Euro-Mediterranean world through their partnership (or possible integration in the case of Turkey) into the European Community.

Thus, the first main turning point, the starting point in fact, was 1995 with the organisation in Barcelona of the 1st Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, whose crucial final declaration meant the launching of the Barcelona Process. In this context, and at the request of the European Commission and the Presidency, our Institute organised the first Euromed Civil Forum to enrich the process with the recommendations of civil society agents from both shores of the Mediterranean. The meeting brought together in Barcelona representatives of all civil society levels from 38 countries, which would deeply influence the entire Barcelona Process.

The second major turning point came seven years later, in 2002. The Barcelona Process managed to lay the first bricks of the institutional architecture of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, beyond ministerial or sectoral conferences and meetings of senior officials. Indeed, the Declaration from the 5th Euromed Conference held in Valencia in 2002 provided for the creation of three institutions: in the political sphere, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly; in the cultural sphere, the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures; and, finally, in the economic sphere, the Facility for Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Partnership (FEMIP), which, whilst not an institution per se, must be considered as such, as we continue to believe that it should ultimately be transformed into a genuine Euro-Mediterranean Development Bank. The IEMed once again adapted to these new conditions; that is why in order to more deeply participate in Euro-Mediterranean Policy, the Institute became the current European Institute of the Mediterranean consortium with the incorporation, alongside the Government of Catalonia, the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Barcelona City Council.

Finally, the third turning point was in 2008, with the launch of the Union for the Mediterranean and the decision to locate its Secretariat in Barcelona as the body responsible for channelling major Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation projects. This was the beginning of a new era of the Euro-Mediterranean project in which the IEMed renewed its strengths and continued to decisively contribute to debating, defining and effectively promoting the development lines of Euro-Mediterranean policy.

Thus, the IEMed is today a highly active Institute at the service of the Euromed project, with an average in recent years of 108 annual activities in 15 Mediterranean or Euro-Mediterranean cities, along with Barcelona. Some have especially marked the evolution of the Institute and Euro-Mediterranean policy itself: the 1995 Euromed Civil Forum; the World Congress on Human Movements and Migration (MHI) that took place in the framework of the Barcelona 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures; the various editions of the North Africa Business Development Forums (NABDF); the World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies (WOCMES) held in 2010, which brought together in Barcelona 2,500 participants from America, Europe, the Arab world and Asia; the Spain-Turkey bilateral forums in Barcelona, Madrid and Istanbul; and, among many others, the Morocco-European Union series of forums and conferences, organised in Barcelona and Rabat, which were key for Morocco to achieve the Morocco/EU Advanced Status currently in force. Or, recently, the Economic Forum of the Western Mediterranean jointly organised with the co-presidencies of the 5+5 and the UfM Secretariat.

In this context, the IEMed has become a point of reference as a think-tank specialised in Euro-Mediterranean policies and development. With already 11 editions, the *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook* publishes every year articles by over 60 authors, and a public presentation of the publication is organised every year at the European Parliament, counting on the presence of the European Commissioner in charge of External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. The Euromed Survey, which we conduct and publish annually at the request of the European Commission, has been released four times and counts on the contribution of approximately 800 experts from all the Euro-Mediterranean countries. The quarterly journal *afkar/ideas*, which monitors and analyses the current state of the Arab and Euro-Mediterranean world, has reached issue number 45. The publication of *PapersIEMed*, the incisive and informative opinion articles in the "Focus" section, books and other monographs is also of great importance. Also the review *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, now in its 15th year, is an outstanding biannual journal of anthropology and reflection on intercultural dialogue in the Mediterranean.

Moreover, since 2010 the IEMed has hosted the Permanent Secretariat of the EuroMeSCo network, made up today by 100 institutes and research centres from 43 Euro-Mediterranean countries working on Mediterranean issues, recognised as the seventh best network of think tanks in the world, and from this year funded by the European Commission. At the same time, the IEMed is also the coordinator of the Spanish network of the Anna Lindh Foundation, which counts on 140 associations.

After two decades of history, we now have the opportunity to examine the challenges that the region is facing and propose initiatives for a better future in the Euro-Mediterranean. And we have to recognise that any of the objectives fixed in 1995 have been fulfilled; even worst, in some cases the conditions have aggravated since then. That is why we must admit that the balance of these twenty years of history is not satisfactory.

New context, new objectives

The results of the Euro-Mediterranean policies we have promoted, along with many others, are important and inadequate in equal measure. The problems we have had to face have been overwhelmingly serious. In 1995 we had hopes for peace in the Middle East that have been painfully and repeatedly dashed. Neither did we honestly expect that before the end of the 20th century we would witness in Europe serious episodes of genocide such as we have seen in the Balkans. 1990s Algeria was an inferno of terrifyingly indiscriminate terrorism. We saw the rise and suppression of the intifadas and the wars and occupations in Lebanon. We opened the new millennium with the collapse of the Twin Towers, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the attacks in London, Madrid and Casablanca. The persistence of the authoritarian regimes in some of the Southern Mediterranean countries, which had failed to observe the commitments to democratisation made in Barcelona in 1995, became unbearable for their citizens.

We must say that, given the outbreak of the Arab Springs and their diverse evolution, the countries that have most followed the path of reform, at least economic and therefore social, of the Barcelona Process (Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan) are those which, one way or another, are succeeding. The citizen revolutions of the Arab world are a cry of hope and provide great opportunities despite also involving, as we are seeing, many pitfalls and dangers.

On the other hand it should also be said that Europe's response to these many problems has clearly been insufficient over the last 25 years, although European policy was aiming in the right direction. This situation is even worst today; with the drama of the current issues throughout the Arab world, and especially in Libya, Syria and Iraq, it must be said that the European response is tragically insufficient. The European Commission allocates each year around 1,000 million euros to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and the European Investment Bank around 2,000 million in soft loans. The figures double if we add Turkey and the Balkans.

The reforms put forward are appropriate, but Europe's political weight is quite inadequate. And so the efficacy of its soft power, with a much weaker budget and power of attraction towards partnership than the help and integration offered to the Eastern European countries, is poor, especially in the short and mid-term, faced with the pressing problems of a world in transformation.

The Mediterranean region needs an efficient and well-coordinated common action. As it was twenty years ago, there are many shared challenges: the fight against extremism and terrorism, the crisis of irregular migration and the humanitarian crisis we are currently facing due to regional conflicts, require an immediate answer. As this instability has direct consequences on Europe, it is clear the necessity to support the partners in the Southern Mediterranean countries in achieving peace, stability and prosperity, with our fundamental, universal values at the basis of our action.

In this context, it is of utmost importance for the EU to redefine the goals behind its cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean Partner Countries. The core long-term objectives of developing relations with the neighbouring countries should remain the promotion of the commonly shared values. The short-term objectives should be however much more detailed, contrary to what has been done during these last years, which has obstructed the definition of concrete steps to achieve them. Therefore, the more specific the short term goals are, the easier will be to adopt the methods to accomplish them and the milestones to reach.

Also, in order to effectively engage partner countries in cooperation, the short-term objectives should be shared and should bring equal benefits to both parties. These kind of common objectives include areas both as fostering economic growth and enhancing security, in the sense of hard security, but also energy security, water security and food security.

Twenty years ago, the Barcelona Declaration made us believe on the objective of transforming the Mediterranean region into an area of peace and stability, of shared economic progress, dialogue and understanding between the peoples and cultures around the Mediterranean Sea. However, this objective seems still to be far right now, a dramatic moment for the North and the South of the Mediterranean.

Even if it seems difficult, we must renew that enthusiasm of 1995; only with that spirit, deepening the political, economic and cultural cooperation with the Mediterranean countries it will be possible to move forward to a better future in order to build the real Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

