

WHITE PAPER on What Union for the Mediterranean?

The Mediterranean basin constitutes a formidable example of socio-cultural richness. For millennia, it has been the great unifier and link for the dozens of countries and cultures from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East as well as Central Asia (via the Black Sea passage). Nowadays it calls upon us to reflect on the possible cohabitation - not only pacific but also collaborative - of the cultures that animate the different countries bordering its waters.

There are many social and economic inequalities within and between these countries, and this is a source of multiple problems that increases the risk of instability for the whole area. The EU member States, bordering the basin on the north, are a group of wealthy and fully developed democracies whereas some other countries bordering the basin are still far away from the same social, political and economical standards. The Maghreb, the Aegean and the Middle East are recognized as areas where great divisions and conflicts constantly grow.

The recent events in Tunisia and Egypt show that people are rising their voices claiming for democracy and better living conditions. The use of violence against these citizens peacefully voicing their opinion is a clear signal that something must be done, both in the interest of the Mediterranean countries themselves and of the European Union, to support a serious cooperation process in the fields of politics, economy and culture.

In the history, the Rhine has been a border for which battles were fought, and today we have to carefully avoid that the Mediterranean becomes such a new border. It is now up to the EU and its partners to facilitate a political policy of understanding, economic progress, and cultural dialogue. That is why we aim to promote *a new way to consider the Mediterranean*, since according to the *YEPP Resolution of April 2010* there are more priorities which still need to be followed.

It is a goal for YEPP and for the EPP that *"the Mediterranean should become an area of common economic development, improved political and cultural exchange and shared political purpose"* (EPP Election Document, Strong for the People, 2009, adopted by the EPP Congress, Warsaw, 29–30 April 2009).

Background: Mediterranean Dialogue

The importance of a Mediterranean Dialogue is a well established issue of the EU.

In 1995, as a result of the Euro-Mediterranean countries Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Barcelona with the aim of *"turning the Mediterranean basin into an area of dialogue, exchange and cooperation guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity"* the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* EUROMED (Formerly known as the *Barcelona Process*) was created.

The EUROMED promotes economic integration and democratic reform across the 27 EU member states and 16 neighbours to the EU's south in North Africa and the Middle East - Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon,

Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

In 2008 cooperation agreements were re-launched in as the *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM*, that was presented as a new phase of Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with new members and an improved institutional architecture in order to "*enhance multilateral relations, increase co-ownership of the process, set governance on the basis of equal footing and translate it into concrete projects, more visible to citizens*".

The UfM has been created by 43 member States that represent one of the most important economic trade areas of the world: they have 750 million inhabitants and make up 25% of world GDP. One of the main objectives of the UfM is the creation of a free trade area that will create growth and prosperity on both sides of the Mediterranean.

One of the main differences between the Barcelona Process and the UfM is the creation of a Secretariat that is in charge of identifying and applying concrete projects which aim at improving the lives of the peoples at both shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The fact that the UfM is launched as a new phase of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership means that the EU accepts and commits to maintain the acquisition of Barcelona, whose purpose is to promote "*peace, stability and prosperity*" throughout the region (Barcelona, 2).

YEPP's Goals

YEPP aims to promote a new way to consider the Mediterranean in its February 2011 conference to be held in Caserta¹ through:

- The re-launch of the *Mediterranean Union* as an EU priority, to make the vagueness of the Barcelona process more operational by linking the points to either domestic policy programmes of the partner state or to EU policy norms and standards as an external anchor. The EPP has up to now given decisive contributions towards the Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation. The UfM constitutes an important instrument in order to realize institutional reforms in the countries of the Mediterranean and to face the decisive challenges of our time.
- Noting with regret the recent resignation of the Secretary General, it is imperative for both sides of the Mediterranean to reappoint a new successor to ensure the administrative requirements are seen to. We recognise that the absence of the Secretary General will be a further obstacle, in addition to the current political deadlock.
- The EU must be made a stakeholder in the search for regional peace in the Mediterranean area, especially in the Middle East, since there can be no security in Europe without security in the Mediterranean area. Europe must concentrate its effort on helping to bring peace to the Middle East, ensuring its economic development, stabilizing energy supply agreements, neutralizing terrorist threats, fighting illegal migration and trafficking and upholding respect for human rights.

¹ Caserta and Campania region, however, also represent the best potential for the development. We are speaking about the youngest territory, with an historical, cultural and industrial heritage, unique in its nature and with interesting potential for an increase in productivity. Southern Italy due to its geographic location can become the new meeting ground between Europe and North Africa, thus fostering a new season of economic, social and political development which can only be of benefit to Italy and the whole of Europe. Africa and Europe need each other.

We propose that the EU and the Mediterranean could cooperate more on security and common foreign policy issues. Example areas of interest include the Middle-East peace process, counter terrorism, illegal migration.

- The recovery of common cultural roots of the Mediterranean area. The EU northern rim of the Mediterranean countries that still bear testimony to the first dialogue between diverse civilizations, the so called *Mare nostrum* ("our-sea"). The southern and eastern rims share many of these historical remains, cultural norms, climactic, culinary, and geographical commonalities. It is essential to rejuvenate the whole Mediterranean's understanding of its common identity as a step towards its political union, its economic cooperation, and solving those conflicts which riddle the area. Although the heritage around the Mediterranean is rich and varied it should be seen as an opportunity to emphasize shared identity and not to find differences.
- The transformation of the Mediterranean in an area of innovation and scientific research contributing to global efforts. The EU is setting up the structures to lead this effort, it must include the Mediterranean at the ground level. We propose that the EU and Mediterranean countries could invest in a Euro-Mediterranean University, like the one inaugurated in Slovenia in June 2008 and to reinforce the Erasmus program with the Mediterranean countries, to provide a framework for cooperation in higher education and research closing the knowledge gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean.
- Energy is a crucial area in which the EU should: work ambitiously in the region preparing the groundwork for other economic improvements; enable a Mediterranean solar, wind, and tidal energy plan that explores opportunities for developing alternative energy sources in the region; promote energy saving, renewable energies, and clean production to safeguard scarce resources and set up good habits; support thematic initiatives such as conferences in cooperation; facilitate jobs for young people and women.
- The promotion of Tourism, since this is an area where the Mediterranean can gain enormously economically and structurally. Mediterranean countries should be encouraged to offer touristic experiences as a cross boarder package. Infrastructural improvements for the use of tourists would bring mobility and prosperity of other sorts. It is important to emphasize that developing tourism should be done in a sustainable manner, for fear of ruining the very attributes which attract visitors. Cultural partnerships should bring tangible improvements on the ground level in the short term and ideological alignment in the long term. This challenge must be to safeguard the cultural heritage; to support the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea, including coastal and protected marine areas; to promote traditional and environmental tourism with UNESCO world heritage sights; to create a common cultural diplomacy.

Adopted by the YEPP Council in Caserta on February 5, 2011.