

EDITORIAL

The push for a new Mediterranean partnership, 25 years on

Roger Albinyana



It is hard to think that the 25th anniversary of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference will relaunch the cooperation in this region. In a complex international and regional context, new challenges have arisen and they step in the way of the consecution of a coordinated action between countries, institutions and regional actions. Nevertheless, this celebration could be an opportunity to dig deeper into the current regional cooperation framework and make it more suitable for the challenges that Mediterranean societies face nowadays.

The strategic interest of the government of Catalonia on this event is more than evident: Barcelona hosts the headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean secretariat, an intergovernmental organisation that promotes regional Euro-mediterranean cooperation. Furthermore, Barcelona and Catalonia have accumulated a significant capital throughout these last 25 years because they have been home to several regional institutions, networks, programs and initiatives. The country's institutions have not always had a leading role in the mobilisation of public and private organisations. Nonetheless, with the recent creation of a Mediterranean Strategy by the Government of Catalonia the country intensifies its commitment and transforms Mediterranean affairs into a key element of its policies.

A qualitative contribution to the debate

IDEES Magazine, edited by the Centre for Contemporary Affairs, publishes in 2020 a monographic issue dedicated to this event, through which it aims to reflect on the impact that the Barcelona Declaration has had in the countries and citizens of the region, make recommendations for the future and contribute to the debate that the celebration will bring about.

The articles of this monographic issue aim to tackle a variety of questions: How can the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation become a useful tool for future situations? What innovative initiatives can be proposed in order to avoid repeating policies and cooperation schemes that have already been used? What policy recommendations can be made to decision makers in such an uncertain moment?

The section of the issue that focuses on the institutional dimension and sustainable economic development places emphasis on the change that Euro-Mediterranean cooperation has gone through and on the new challenges and new policy areas that have emerged since 1995. This monographic issue incorporates innovative topics such as the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda, sustainable urban development, the fight against the climate emergency or the irruption of digital economy and the industrial revolution that it brings about. The magazine also focuses on other topics that have evolved considerably during these last 25 years and that have repositioned the region in the global geopolitical arena, such as the security architecture, political cooperation or the emergence of the African continent.

The Mediterranean region is going through a more delicate moment than it was in 1995, threatened by a growing political instability, an increasing economic inequality between northern and southern countries and a climate crisis. Will it be possible to consolidate a political, economic and social cooperation that will help fight these challenges?

Among the articles that focus on the institutional dimension of Mediterranean integration, Senén Florensa's explores the question whether, after these 25 years, there is still space for a renewed European project for the southern Mediterranean, taking into consideration the evolution of the multilateral institutional architecture. Dario Cristiani asks in his article whether the loss of the EU's and the US' influence on the region during the last 10 years has been seized by global and regional emerging potencies, such as China, Russia, Iran or the Gulf countries in order to consolidate their regional influence. In addition, Roger Albinyana and Claudio Salmeri analyse the impact that the emergency of the African continent as a political and economic actor currently has in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

On the topic of sustainable human development, this issue sheds light into the main

challenges that the region faces and that affect all countries indistinctly. Jérémie Fosse introduces an ambitious proposal to implement the UN's Agenda 2030; Rym Ayadi and Carlo Sessa explore the irruption of digital economy in the Mediterranean and whether it can be an element of transformation and inclusive growth or, on the contrary, a factor of societal polarisation. Oriol Barba examines the new urban agenda in the Mediterranean region as a means to achieve an inclusive and smart space. Finally, Arnau Queralt-Bassa, Katarzyna Marini, Wolfgang Cramer, Joel Guiot, Arnault Graves and Grammenos Mastrojeni empirically test the reasons that urge the region to act urgently against the climate emergency.

The Mediterranean region is going through a more delicate moment than it was in 1995. It is threatened by a growing political instability, an increasing economic inequality between northern and southern countries and a climate crisis that describes the region as one of the worst-off regions at a global scale. Will it be possible to consolidate a political, economic and social cooperation at a regional and sub-regional level that will help fight these challenges? Will the 25th anniversary be an opportunity to reinforce Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?



Roger Albinyana

Roger Albinyana is Director of the Mediterranean Regional Policies and Human Development department at the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). He is also an associate professor at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Barcelona, where he teaches international economic policy. Moreover, he is a board member at the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) and a member of the advisory council of the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA). He holds an MA in Economic History from the University of Barcelona and the Autonomous University of Barcelona, a BA in Economics from Pompeu Fabra University and a BA in Business Administration and Management from the Open University of Catalonia. He has previously served as Secretary General for Foreign and EU Affairs of the Government of Catalonia (2013-2016), while he was also a member of the EU Committee of the Regions. Previously, he had served as advisor and expert on private sector development at the Secretariat of Union for the Mediterranean an international institution based in Barcelona (2010-2013).