

# THE **FUTURE** OF THE EU-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS

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Socialist Group in the  
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## Foreword

*The EU-Mediterranean partnership launched in 1995 in Barcelona, the European Neighbourhood Policy of 2003 and the recent proposals offer the possibility of a re-launch of the Mediterranean policy between the two shores which is sustained by a bigger ambition. Yet this policy and the initiatives aimed at this region present an unsatisfactory result.*

*For this reason the Socialist Group in the European Parliament proposes the creation of a new approach in order to re-launch the Euro-Mediterranean relations. The Group has therefore decided to take the forefront and to elaborate this position paper which contains key ideas and proposals for a new approach to these relations.*

*In four main ideas the Group presents a concept for the future of the EU-Mediterranean partnership. These are supported by a series of concrete proposals on the economic, social and cultural as well as political and institutional dimension of the EU-Mediterranean relations which demonstrate the strategic importance that the Socialist Group reserves to relations between the European Union and its partner countries of the Mediterranean.*

*The Naples conference of 11 and 12 June 2008 has given us the opportunity to present this position paper and to launch an in-depth debate on these proposals with personalities from the two shores. We are committed to maintaining this debate high on the political agenda of the EU.*

*Martin Schulz*

*President of the Socialist Group  
in the European Parliament*

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*Vice-President of the Socialist Group  
in the European Parliament*



# 1. Introduction

The Mediterranean forcefully returns to the core of the political debate. The recent initiatives concentrate on a result of more than 30 years of Mediterranean policy judged most unsatisfactory regarding the hopes which were raised with every revival. From a global Mediterranean policy, launched in 1972, to a EU-Mediterranean partnership in 1995, not omitting the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of 2003, many frameworks have succeeded each other, even doubled each other at the expense of incoherence altogether. The persistent gap between the EU-Mediterranean speech and its problematic establishment in the reality of a region which is a victim of multiple fractures and continuous tensions, calls for more lucidity in the reflection and for bigger ambition in action.

**We propose to focus on the aim to re-launch the EU-Mediterranean relations.**





## 2. Balance of the EU-Mediterranean partnership

The EU-Mediterranean partnership, launched in 1995 with the Declaration of Barcelona, constitutes an ambitious project for the development of the region, announced in the context of the Oslo Agreements concluded in 1993 between Palestinians and Israelis. More than 10 years on, the record of the cooperation remains mitigated, while the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is worryingly more and more bogged down.

One needs to note that the end of the Cold War and the bipolar world order has resulted in important radical changes on both shores of the Mediterranean: on the European side the affirmation of a common foreign policy for the Mediterranean area has become not only a possibility but rather – since the beginning of the 1990s – a requirement, keeping in mind the growing interdependence at stake. As for the Arab countries which form the majority of the Mediterranean partners on the southern shore, most of their governments have expressed their will to participate more actively to the system of international relations. Finally, emancipated and reformist tendencies among the Arab populations have started to surface in response to the aspirations of change expressed in those countries.

Yet it was evident from the start that the Barcelona process could not by itself inverse the historical political, economical and social tendencies. Without its momentum they would have worsened.

On the regional level the geo-strategic context has been marked by the ongoing intensive Israeli-Palestinian conflict which blocks the political cooperation process as foreseen by the Declaration of Barcelona and is putting an end to the project of a charter for peace and stability in the region. Other crucial events such as the attacks of 9/11 and the war in Iraq in 2003 weigh heavily on the EU-Mediterranean relations, thus creating a confidence crisis between the two shores which puts a question mark on the continuation of the actions already being carried out. The apparent differences at the Barcelona Summit in 2005 regarding the elaboration of a common agenda in the fight against terrorism are nothing but an illustration of this.

On the economic level, expectations for common prosperity created by the interdependence between Europe and the Mediterranean countries have not produced adequate answers. Progressive trade liberalisation, the central economical issue of the partnership, has neither promoted production and growth, nor has it promoted employment. The regional integration has not been accelerated by a free-trade zone and remains extremely weak.

Finally, the third pillar of the Barcelona process, the cultural dialogue which was meant to contribute to “peace, stability and prosperity” in the region, has not seen significant progress either.

Regarding the dialogue of cultures and the perception of each other, manifestations of mutual incomprehension have surfaced since more than a decade, fuelled even more by the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In parts of the Arab and Muslim world voices were raised to denounce what is seen as the cultural hegemony of the West. European public opinion showed growing fear of these oppositions. These manifestations also fuelled the extremist speech of some political groupings of racist and xenophobic character.

On the European and institutional level, European political interest has concentrated on the East using a strategy which led to the historical reunification of the continent in 2004. The shifting of the external borders of an enlarged Europe has led to the creation of new relational frameworks such as the ENP aimed – since its launch by the Commission – at setting up an area of prosperity and good neighbourhood with countries which are potential candidates of the European Union as well as with countries which will not become members of the European Union.

Furthermore the European engagement to offer a perspective to the countries on the southern shore to participate in the Single Market in order to promote the free movement of people, services, goods and capital has yet to become reality.

The general concept of the existing partnership is part of a renewed dialogue between North and South which conducts to imbalanced results thus showing its limits with regard to the new stakes raised by the global economy. Globalisation is a reality which bears heavy consequences. It is a continuous process which at present touches the Mediterranean area. There are certainly opportunities to be found but it will also bring about new forms of competition, challenges and dangers of de-structuring for those territories which are still ill-prepared. These factors will not contribute to the needs of local populations, and particularly to the creation of jobs.

**The global balance of the Barcelona process, although shedding a light on insufficient achievements, underlines a potential which remains to be optimized.**

**We propose a new approach as a preceding condition for every initiative of re-launch aimed at the EU-Mediterranean cooperation.**



### 3. Four ideas to create a new state of mind

The creation of a new approach between the partners on the two shores of the Mediterranean constitutes a necessary condition for the re-launch of the EU-Mediterranean cooperation.

Our measure comprises four ideas:

1. First of all, the conceptual framework of Barcelona needs to be re-confirmed by breaking up clearly with the security view which is present both in the management of certain common problems (i.e. question of migration) and in the perception by the southern partners of all European policies and generally described as a response to the security fears of Europe. At stake is the credibility of a genuine community of values, interests and destinies which remains the main objective of a partnership process between equals.
2. Secondly, the EU-Mediterranean relations have been based for too long on the quest for stability and short term strategic partnerships. The credibility of the European policy of democratisation and promotion of human rights depends on a strong and visible support for the civil societies and democratic political organisations on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.
3. Furthermore, the growing social and economic disparities between the two shores more than ever calls for the creation of a EU-Mediterranean area which is integrated into the global economy. This reality incites us to put a true agenda of economical cooperation into place, both on a regional and sub-regional level with development as its prime objective. This would allow for a progressive convergence in economical and social terms using common policies for each sector.

4. Finally, the political will must go hand in hand with a serious reflexion on possible future institutions genuine to the EU-Mediterranean cooperation. The creation of common structures could offer a framework which would allow for a strengthened dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The decision of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008 to set up a Union for the Mediterranean between the countries of the EU and their Southern partners is a new challenge. The European Commission which was mandated to elaborate concrete proposals on the Union, must from the start involve the European Parliament into this reflection. The necessary impulse to a EU-Mediterranean cooperation could take profit of the advantages of an enhanced cooperation as foreseen in the new dispositions of the Lisbon Treaty.

The parliamentary dimension must also find its place, notably through the association of the EMPA, and liaison at institutional level must be recognised and consolidated. The role of civil society at the same time must be strengthened through a larger implication into the EU-Mediterranean decision making mechanisms.

**Consolidate the spirit of Barcelona by re-affirming its conceptual framework in view of the construction of the establishment of a community of values, interests and destinies, breaking with the security logics of the Mediterranean stakes.**

**Announce a real policy of democratisation and promotion of human rights via a visible support to the civil societies and political organisations on the southern shore.**

**Launch an agenda of economical regional and sub-regional cooperation in order to lower the social and economic disparities between the two shores and anchor the region into the global economy.**

**Participate with our proposals in the debates and initiatives which aim at reviewing and developing the EU-Mediterranean cooperation by strengthening them in the framework of the existing institutions. In this perspective the European Parliament will have a major role to play. At the same time, the EMPA will assure the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process. Finally, civil society must find its place within the EU-Mediterranean decision making mechanisms.**



## 4. The future of the EU-Mediterranean partnership

Although the bilateral relations are of importance in the EU-Mediterranean relations, and despite of the difficulties of the Barcelona process, as a multilateral framework this process more than ever keeps its relevance in a context of crisis, trouble and uncertainty. This is why this process without doubt needs to be consolidated, re-launched and revitalized in order to face the common stakes.

The concept of a EU-Mediterranean partnership is part of a multilateral approach of the international relations. Human development which is the core of the project constitutes an opportunity to concretise the UN Millennium goals for development in the Mediterranean region, thus underlining the interest of possible synergies with other frameworks and global development partnerships, such as the ones in sub-Saharan Africa.

The re-launch of the EU-Mediterranean partnership constitutes a political necessity in order to build a strategic alliance. Nevertheless it would be opportune to follow the principles of participation, equal partnership and concerted action which must prime in the management of the achievements of cooperation. Such an attitude will strengthen – among the southern partners – the sentiment of appropriation of this process. The societies of the southern countries start – at different degrees – to engage into reforms in order to try to integrate and to correct the excesses of market economy and to assimilate democratic principles. Yet much remains to be done.

The re-launch of the Barcelona process cannot focus solely on economic and trade issues. The three pillars of Barcelona are closely linked and must necessarily progress together. The objective of creating a free trade zone and the liberalisation of trade are not a goal in itself. It must be accompanied by a strengthening of the regional cooperation as well as of the social and environmental integration.

Regaining the attention of the southern partners for the EU-Mediterranean cooperation is an indispensable condition for the success of this objective.

The EU-Mediterranean cooperation must also extend its area of application to the countries of the Adriatic coast which Mediterranean identity needs to be fully recognised.

Finally, any revival of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation must avoid tensions caused by cultural misunderstandings or misperceptions on both sides. The acquis that represents the Alliance of Civilisations under the auspices of the United Nations must benefit to the strengthening of common and universal values without alienating everybody's cultural specificities.

**On the political level we reiterate our attachment to the EU-Mediterranean partnership in order to establish a political and strategic contract with the countries on the southern shore. We re-affirm the relevance of the Barcelona process because we want the reinforcement of the Mediterranean dimension in the EU, using the existing institutions and instruments (enhanced cooperation, other operational frameworks).**



## 5. Our proposals

- 1. Barcelona process and ENP.** We remind of the solid links which since long unite the European Union and the countries of the southern Mediterranean. In this context the ENP cannot only limit itself exclusively to action plans for each country, nor replace or compete with the Euro-Mediterranean policy. Both policies must be complementary, they must actively support and encourage the reform process in the countries on the southern shore and reinforce regional cooperation. We insist on a clearer definition of the ENP objectives in order not to weaken the Barcelona process by privileging bilateral approaches but rather by privileging a multilateral regional approach. Furthermore, by respecting the geographical distribution of European financial aid as foreseen in the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 and its modalities of approval, the ENP should not deceive the legitimate expectations of our Mediterranean partners.
- 2. Conflict resolution.** We must express a true and permanent engagement regarding solutions to the many conflicts which prevail in the region. If the Middle East conflict merits an urgent settlement, other conflicts such as the one of the Western Sahara cannot remain without solution. The European Union must assume the role of leadership in the resolution of these conflicts by capitalising on the confidence of all parties involved.
- 3. *Economic and social policies.*** We support a vision for the economic and social policies which is based on a similar economical growth plan, equality, regional development and territorial convergence. We deem it necessary that the population as a whole benefits from the favours of growth. The economic policies must be evaluated not only in terms of their contribution to growth but also in terms of the number of jobs they are creating, their contribution to the reduction of poverty and their contribution to the development of poor areas. We reiterate that the EU trade policy must not go against or be in contradiction with its development policy. In doing so, the trade agreements negotiated by the EU with its Mediterranean neighbours,

by integrating an environmental and social dimension, must pursue the objective of reducing the wealth gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean, for instance the ILO regulations on decent labour.

4. **Agriculture.** Agriculture plays a central role for the improvement of life conditions of the rural populations for the protection of the environment, for the reduction of the rural exodus and immigration. Every overture in this sector must be conducted in a progressive manner adapted to the socio-economic realities of each country. As for the agricultural production, further to global negotiations one must rather proceed case by case and product by product keeping in mind the need for the protection of sensitive goods which must be the object of particular attention and possibly excluded from liberalisation. In this respect a reflexion on an integrated EU-Mediterranean agricultural policy which is founded on the complementarity of its chain, on a viable water policy and centred on food sovereignty needs to be conducted.

5. **Energy and sustainable development.** We are persuaded that we first must consider the problem of sustainable development, even more so as the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean are in full energetic growth. We want to anticipate and learn the lessons from the development mode of the European countries, avoiding unnecessary costs for the partner countries. Our vocation is to stimulate investment in favour of projects which prioritise renewable energies and on energetic efficiency allowing the reduction of the greenhouse gases. Furthermore, by concrete answers, we must contribute to access to drinking water and fight effectively against the pollution of the Mediterranean Sea.

6. **Various questions of economical and financial order.** We wish:

- Contribution to the creation of more job opportunities, especially for the growing number of youths in the region.
- Improvement of the climate for enterprises, especially for SMEs, reduction of administrative and legal obstacles.
- Facilitating the access to loans, especially micro-loans, handed out both by the private banking sector and by the public banking sector by consolidating the financial sector and by improving cooperation between financial institutions.
- Creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Investment and Development Bank capable of attracting direct foreign investments of which the EU-Mediterranean region is lacking. A contribution by the Gulf States could contribute to the realisation of this objective.

- Recognise and support the role of migrants on behalf of the development of their home countries, by facilitating their investments in these countries and by reducing the cost of transfers.
- Improvement of the management of public institutions.
- Consolidation of the macro-economic stability and improvement of the financial management.

**7. *Social cohesion.*** The social dimension must be at the core of the EU-Mediterranean policy since the liberalisation of commerce and free trade is not an end in itself. We should take into account the populations' needs and redirect the EU-Mediterranean policy in order to target the objectives of social and economic convergence between the two shores as well as inside each country.

**8. *Education and research.*** We recognise the crucial role of education and research for the political, economic and social development. Our aim is to arrive to an equal and unconditional access to quality education in accordance with the Millennium objectives for development. We recognize the crucial role of education and research for the political, economic and social development of society. Our aim is to achieve an equal and unconditional access to quality education in accordance with the Millennium Goals for the Development. Furthermore we wish to see the engagements taken on scientific and university cooperation being translated into reality in order to facilitate the mobility of students and university lecturers of the South in the European area, be it through study visits or via exchanges of shorter duration. The extension to the neighbourhood of TEMPUS is a supplementary opportunity which needs to be taken. The recent launching of the ERASMUS-MUNDUS programme is a first step in this respect.

**9. *Immigration.*** Immigration, social integration, judiciary and security are issues of a solidary interest of the partnership based on the strict respect of dignity and human rights.

- Promote the opportunities of legal immigration Facilitate legal movement as this constitutes an opportunity for economic growth and a means to improve trade between the countries on both shores.
- Reinforce the political, economic and social integration of legal immigrants.
- Manage the illegal immigration issue significantly by fighting the networks of human trafficking without delegating its sole responsibility to our Southern partners.

- Reinforce legal cooperation and consolidate the democratic governance of cooperation in terms of security (reform of the legal system, evaluation of the regional cooperation for the external dimension of the area of liberties, security and justice).
- Make migration a lever of development of our Mediterranean partners by favouring circularly migration and by supporting co-development projects.
- Act in order to avoid the drain of competences and of qualified labour in certain sectors in order to organise on the contrary a better circulation of competences, carrier of mutual enrichment and shared growth.
- Reinforce cooperation between the countries and with the participation of the European institutions, in particular the European Commission, in order to achieve the highest possible level of convergence between the pension schemes, access to health care and other social rights of the immigrant workers.

**10. *Democratisation and human rights promotion.*** Our support to civil society organisations and non-violent democratic political formations must be a part of the efforts made at regional level. As for the tools we must take advantage of all the possibilities offered by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and use the highest rigour in monitoring the engagements taken by the Southern partners on the basis of the reference points discussed in the framework of the sub-committees “democracy and human rights”.

**11. *Status of women.*** It is necessary to strengthen the status of women in the Mediterranean region through policies which give a major role to women in their societies and by promoting gender equality. The respect of traditions and customs does not have to come at the detriment of their fundamental rights.

**12. *Civil society.*** We favour a greater participation of civil society into the setting up of the partnership and the ENP. The promotion of dialogue inside the societies, the respect of human dignity and the fight against poverty need the continuation and amplification of these relations with the political authorities of the partnership. We call on the European Commission and the governments of the partner states to insure for a better consultation of civil society both on a national and regional level and to favour the development of programmes aimed at strengthening the civil society organisations and the structures of dialogue. We support the creation of consultative bodies in those countries in the region that do not dispose of them yet.

**13. *Local communities.*** Local communities can use their knowledge of urban problems specific to the territories they administer. The communities already are an essential lever for fighting poverty and inequality. There where they were implicated they were able to demonstrate their usefulness for local development. We recognise this necessity and we demand the instauration of a dialogue and of a permanent consultation between the EU and the local authorities and their representative associations at all levels – national or regional – notably by associating them to the instances of dialogue between the EU and the partner countries, such as the EMPA or the Council of Ministers.

**14. *Intercultural dialogue.*** We reaffirm the fact that a strengthened EU-Mediterranean partnership must be based on a common progress of the political, economical, social, cultural and human pillars of the Barcelona Process. The first forum of the Alliance of Civilisations held in January 2008 under the auspices of the UN in the presence of Zapatero, Erdogan, Ban Ki Moon and Sampaio reaffirmed the will to work together in order to improve the social and cultural comprehension between populations and to resolve the political conflicts, in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The cooperation must put culture at the core of the action. In doing so, the EU must continue to promote the rapprochement of the cultures on both shores of the Mediterranean, in particular through a strengthening of the audiovisual sector as indispensable communication tool. The regional programme Euromed Audiovisual II (2006 - 2008) destined at the formation of professionals of the audiovisual and cinema of the Mediterranean countries merits renewing and reinforcing by the EU as it has positive effects on the circulation of the Southern cultural production. Furthermore, the media could play a more important role in the reinforcement of the cultural dialogue and the dissemination of historical and cultural knowledge.

Finally, the EU must also optimise the role of the Anna Lindh EU-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures by recognising a higher visibility of the institution, re-defining its missions and by substantially increasing the financial resources it disposes of.

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