



A MOMENT TO REFLECT:

# Creating Euro-Mediterranean bonds that deliver

Haizam Amirah-Fernández, Carmen Descamps  
and Eduard Soler i Lecha (Eds.)

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# Preface



In times of the pandemic, humankind faces a global crisis. The Euro-Mediterranean area is no exception to this. Looking back at developments in the region only during the past 15 years, one is tempted to think that countries and citizens around the Mediterranean were marked by a succession of various crises: a financial and subsequent debt crisis unfolding from 2007, waves of Arab Uprisings starting in 2011, which have not brought about the advance of democracy, a subsequent surge in migration movements towards Europe from 2015, the threat of international terrorism, the rise of populism and nationalist resentments in various EU member states and, most recently, COVID-19 with expected long-term societal impacts. But there is more to it.

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barcelona Process some months ago presented a timely moment to assess the past and to explore new opportunities for stronger bonds between both shores of the Mediterranean on all levels of society. In an era of globalisation, we are ever more interconnected – for the best and for the worst. Multiple challenges arising from crises often do not stop where national borders or continents do. Crises also bear an opportunity, if not an imperative, to adjust our course of action. Current decisions will shape the region for years to come, not only its national health-care systems, but also the economies, politics and culture of the Mediterranean countries. How can the Euro-Mediterranean agenda be adapted to this new reality, once the storm has passed?

The present Report: “A moment to reflect: Creating Euro-Mediterranean bonds that deliver” brings together analyses by experts and testimonies by those who are engaged in the creation of such bonds through different professional domains. Its aim is to highlight best practices and provide new ideas for a constructive and future-oriented Euro-Mediterranean relationship in a post-COVID era. The initiative stems from the conviction of the need to strengthen collaboration between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours. Even more so, during and in the aftermath of the pandemic, we have to create and foster platforms for dialogue and joint action.

More than a mere stocktaking exercise, this initiative should foster further exchanges around “Euro-Mediterranean bonds that deliver”. The current pandemic is an opportunity to relaunch relations between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours, emphasising the existing potential for a more inclusive, prosperous and positive future. Drafted during the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Barcelona Declaration, this Report aims to stir debate by providing reflections and the impetus that go beyond the moment of commemoration. The Report is a joint endeavour by CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Elcano Royal Institute and Friedrich Naumann Foundation Madrid – a partnership between the two most influential Spanish foreign policy think tanks and a German political foundation devoted to political education and dialogue worldwide, and since December 2019 also from its Mediterranean Dialogue office in Madrid.

We wish you an inspiring read and invite you to join our Euro-Mediterranean debate.

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# 2

## Three scenarios for the Euro- Mediterranean region: key players and priorities



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# WHY DOES THE MEDITERRANEAN MATTER?

The Mediterranean is a bridge and a ditch, a sea of encounter between civilisations and, at the same time, a frontier that separates very different realities. Nowadays, the Mediterranean is a compendium of almost all the major issues with which the international community is faced. Notable and growing demographic and economic imbalances between its northern and southern shores, combined with sociopolitical conflicts, are causing a multiplicity of dynamics, several of which represent threats to the security and prosperity of people living around the Mediterranean basin and beyond.

The Mediterranean region has been undergoing an intense transformation since 2011, in part as a consequence of the anti-authoritarian revolts, known as the “Arab Uprisings” or “Arab Spring”, that have affected several countries in the region. This process will most probably accelerate as a result of the multiple crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its socio-economic impact is being felt across the Mediterranean region. It cannot be ruled out that, in the not too distant future, the crises provoked by the pandemic will bring about changes in the form of social upheavals, violence or the collapse of state services and institutions.

The trend with regard to the Mediterranean, when it comes to peace and stability, is not promising. In early 2011, there were no failed states in the southern Mediterranean. Ten years later, there were already two failed states, devastated by civil wars fuelled from abroad (Syria and Libya), while other states were increasingly subject to tensions, owing

to the disconnect between their inefficient states and their dissatisfied societies (Lebanon and Algeria, among others). The new international context, marked by the global emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, may be an aggravating factor for existing problems and a multiplier of conflicts around the Mediterranean, but it could also generate new opportunities for collaboration and inclusive development, if the proper policies and approaches are put in place and upheld.

## WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?

The Mediterranean is one of the areas in which the European Union (EU) has made the most effort and in which it has devoted a great deal of creativity and imagination to rethink the frameworks of cooperation. When the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) was launched in 1995, some of the main objectives stated in the Barcelona Declaration were to establish “a common area of peace, stability and shared prosperity”, to put in place a “Euro-Mediterranean free trade area” by 2010, to work towards the “strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights”, and to develop a “Euro-Mediterranean partnership for greater understanding and closeness between peoples”. Twenty-five years later, none of those objectives has been achieved. Neither the subsequent European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) nor the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) have advanced the achievement of those objectives in a significant way.

The current regional situation is worse, at various levels, than it was in 1995: new conflicts have emerged and the old ones have not been resolved; the region has multiplied the number of refugees and internally displaced people; inequalities between the two rims, and even inside each of the countries, have increased; with few exceptions, respect for human rights and political freedoms has receded in most southern and eastern Mediterranean countries; and illiberal trends have also shored up in the EU. Despite major progress in transportation and connectivity, the emotional gap between Europe and its neighbours has been widened. Considering the goals stated then in the Barcelona Declaration, it is undeniable that the EU and its southern and eastern Mediterranean partners have not been successful in transforming the region in a positive way. That failure has generated a profound feeling of fatigue and even frustration.

If the EU wants to see a course correction in its relations with the southern and eastern Mediterranean, it should start by acknowledging that the good intentions of the initial plan have not been matched by political will or the adequate instruments. Certainly, the context in which Euro-Mediterranean relations have developed has been anything but helpful: the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; acute geopolitical tensions among Middle Eastern regional powers, as well as between the EU and re-emerged global actors such as Russia; Trump’s incendiary policies and discourses; and the concatenation of global and European crises, ranging from the 2008 financial crisis to Brexit and COVID-19. And yet, alluding to this hostile context should not prevent the advocates of stronger and wider Euro-Mediterranean relations to critically reassess the priorities and tools to identify what has failed and the extent to which alternative pathways can be explored.

One of the main reasons behind the inconsistencies and lack of coherence between discourses and policy outcomes is to be found in a widespread and oversimplifying

idea. For decades, the EU has been trapped in what it perceived as a “dilemma between values and interests”: if it wanted to be true to its values, it would have to press for genuine democratic reform, but if it tried to defend its immediate interests, it would have to maintain friendly relations with autocracies. However, for many years now, the problem of the definition of interests has generated a false dichotomy between security and democratisation in Europe’s Mediterranean neighbourhood. Needless to say, non-democratic regimes are comfortable with that dichotomy and actively promote it.

In short, while the EU presented itself as a “transformative power” in the southern neighbourhood and its partners in the region agreed in principle with the transformative agenda in 1995, policies supporting the “authoritarian stability” paradigm have contributed decisively to strengthening actors that favoured the status quo. All this led to a deteriorated form of stability, to a lack of economic progress, to rising inequalities and social unrest and to the instrumentalisation of identity and fear politics to hide the inability to respond to the demands and needs of the citizenry in the region.



## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Global factors, but also changes in Europe and the Mediterranean, will have a major impact on the possibilities to breathe new life into Euro-Mediterranean relations. The launch of the Barcelona Process, back in 1995, mirrored a moment of enthusiasm for globalisation, a need to rebalance Europe’s international priorities and the much-awaited hope for peace in the Middle East after the signature of the Oslo Accords. Likewise, we should understand the extent to which the current context may enable or hamper attempts to promote a more powerful dynamic of collaboration in this region, and how it may shape the agenda in the years to come.

**Globally**, multilateralism has been openly contested. The UN turned 75 years old at the moment when the still first global power, the US, eroded its commitment to the system it had contributed to forge. Under former US President Donald Trump, the multilateral victims were piling up: the Paris Agreement on climate change, the withdrawal from UNESCO and the nuclear agreement with Iran (JCPOA), the end of funding for UNRWA (the agency in charge of Palestinian refugees) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The new US President Joe Biden has quickly changed the course of action, despite the deepening fault lines in American society and politics. The EU also remains a staunch advocate of multilateralism and tries to explore alliances with countries and regional organisations to preserve it. Doubts persist about the capacity of these restoration efforts to revert the existing tendencies. Meanwhile, the palpable multipolar nature of the internal system is coupled with a more assertive – albeit aggressive – attitude by emerging global and regional powers.



In light of the mushrooming tensions across the globe for the control of strategic territories, it is also tempting to affirm that old-style geopolitics is back. A more fragmented, but also increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, is in the making. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global reach of its social and economic consequences have been a harsh reality check, amplifying many existing problems, among which multidimensional inequalities (income, gender, generational, among others). This world that feels more vulnerable is, nonetheless, one that is increasingly aware of the major systemic challenges that it will have to face – climate change, decarbonisation, digitalisation – and that most of them require international cooperation. The fight against the pandemic is one among many other topics on which world leaders will have to choose between collaboration or competition. Euro-Mediterranean relations are essentially a multilateral project which cannot but suffer if multilateralism is further eroded, if competition prevails over cooperative impulses and if this region becomes the object of regional or global geopolitical designs that are completely disconnected from people's needs and demands.

The **EU**, the main driving force of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, has been struggling with overlapping crises for more than a decade that include, among others, the dire effects of the global financial crisis, which widened the gap between northern and southern countries and between creditors and debtors; the rise of Eurosceptic movements, which have attacked the EU institutions, but have also resorted to an illiberal, nationalist and Islamophobic rhetoric; the proliferation of conflicts in its southern and eastern neighbours, leading to increased migratory pressure towards Europe; the traumatic experience of UK's exit from the EU; and increasingly visible differences among member states on key foreign policy issues. Once more, COVID-19 amplifies the relevance of these fractures but, on the other side, the ambition of the EU

recovery fund is largely seen as an acknowledgement that lessons have been drawn from the failures of the management of the previous shocks.

The EU's ambition to engage its southern neighbourhood in major transformational projects was manifested in the Joint Communication "Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood", published in February 2021 by the High Representative and the European Commission. This policy document focused on five priority areas: human development, good governance and the rule of law; digitalisation; peace and security; migration and mobility; and the green transition linked to climate resilience, energy and the environment. This comes at a time when there are calls for a more geopolitical Europe that would seek greater strategic autonomy. However, the EU's Communication refers to "a new agenda for the Mediterranean", but without making it explicit how the EU plans to promote reforms in neighbouring countries, in terms of the incentives it is ready to offer or the risks that it is prepared to endure in order to help transform its southern neighbourhood.



The **Mediterranean** is far from being part of a ring of prosperous, stable, well-governed and friendly countries, as intended by the European Neighbourhood Policy back in 2004. Quite the opposite. The causes of social unrest that led in 2011 – and again in 2019 – to mass protests in several Arab countries have not been addressed. Persistent levels of youth unemployment, gender and territorial gaps, day-to-day corruption, impunity, human rights violations, dysfunctional institutions and deficient public services are contributing to fuelling despair and social unrest.

The region has also witnessed the proliferation of new conflicts, often intersecting among them and making their resolution even more difficult. The consequences are well known: millions of internally displaced people and refugees, damaged infrastructures and brutalised generations. These new foci of instability are added to the very old conflicts, with the Israeli-Palestinian at the pinnacle and its two-state solution at risk of becoming a diplomatic fiction. Despite this depressing state of affairs, the societies of the region have proven not only their resilience, but also their political maturity, courage, dynamism and creativity, also when facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. What is less evident is the extent to which decision makers in the region are realising the costs of inaction and the need to offer a perspective of change.

## WHERE COULD WE BE HEADING TO?

Even if the risks are apparent, the future of this region and of its relations with Europe is not predetermined. Alternative futures are imaginable and, whilst conditioned by a burdensome history and by megatrends that are unlikely to be reverted in the short run, today's actions or inactions will lead us to one or another scenario. Assuming that change is possible, and that actions taken from now on could steer the region towards distinct futures, is the very first step to induce decision makers and stakeholders to come to act together to avoid those scenarios that undermine their interests and values, and to plant the seeds of a brighter future.

The point of departure of this Report, and of the collective exercise of reflection behind it, is that we are at a critical juncture, due among others to the coincidence of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Madrid Conference for peace in the Middle East, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arab Uprisings and the dire effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in both rims of the Mediterranean. Three main alternative futures can be envisaged, if we take the quality and nature of the relations between the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean space as the main variable of change. This Report is not neutral, but explicitly aims at shedding light on the advantages of one of them, and to offer some actionable ideas on how to increase its chances of coming into being.

The preferred scenario is the one we have called **"bonds that deliver"**. This alludes to a future in which relations between states

and societies around the Mediterranean are more intense than today in the fields of trade, investment, tourism, mobility, educational exchanges, flows of ideas and cultural expressions. These stronger bonds would not only benefit both sides in terms of economic prosperity, innovation capacity, attractiveness to global investors and social cohesion, they would also create a situation of interdependence that buffers the risk of conflict because its cost is just unaffordable. What is more, people-to-people exchanges, hybrid cultural referents and better conditions for mobility would start to create a certain feeling of kinship that is perfectly compatible with other identities.

The intensification of these relations would not be a product of one isolated decision or the deliverable of a major international summit. It would rather be the result of many actions, initiatives and programmes, some initiated by the states themselves and supranational organisations, and others promoted by the civil society, the economic agents and leading individuals. The realisation that some of the challenges that the region is facing – such as environmental degradation or the post-pandemic economic and social reconstruction – could not be dealt with but collectively would be instrumental in changing the mindset. The realisation of the risks of failing to do so, and evidence-based studies of the benefits of cooperation is what could empower forward-looking and reformist leaderships, as well as a persistent pressure from below that advocates for strengthening Euro-Mediterranean bonds.

However, it would also be possible to imagine a future of increased disconnect between both rims of the Mediterranean. We will refer to this second scenario as one of **“looser bonds”**. As a result of the impossibility of dealing with too many crises at the same time, the countries and societies of Europe and the Mediterranean might adopt an introspective mood. Inward-looking attitudes might prevail across the board, partly because governments and institutions would have dealt poorly with yesterday's crises and

would fail to anticipate the ones to come. Even more so, if the EU integration process suffers from internal blockages or a lack of leadership and ambition.

In this second scenario, the emotional gap between European societies and their Mediterranean counterparts would progressively widen, particularly in a context in which borders are less permeable and both regions look at extraregional powers (US, China, India, Russia and certain Gulf countries) for partners and referents, while turning their backs on their closest neighbours. As a result, the Union for the Mediterranean and other regional cooperation endeavours would become increasingly irrelevant. Failed attempts by individual leaders to revamp this collaboration, without the necessary resources and allies to back them, would have contributed to the Mediterranean fatigue, firstly, and then to some sort of Mediterranean amnesia in which the goals to turn this region into a space of peace and shared prosperity are no longer invoked.

The previous scenario is quite discouraging, but it could be worse. We will refer to the scenario of the **“too tight bonds”** as one in which states and societies do look at each other and care about political and social developments in the other rim, but the relations would be increasingly hostile and securitised. Seen from Europe, the south would be portrayed almost exclusively as a container of threats, a space condemned to backwardness, violence and fanaticism. Turkey and the EU could be constantly clashing, and they would no longer see each other as partners or allies, but rather as permanent and dangerous rivals. Old conflicts would persist, frozen conflicts occasionally melt, and new ones would have been added to the list. Inter-Arab cooperation and solidarity would remain an illusion and the complicated game of alliances and counter-alliances in the Middle East would almost be impossible to apprehend, with some European states fully embedded in that game.

In this third scenario, Europe could have seen the consolidation of radical right-wing movements. European countries could no longer give lessons, as their record on human rights and civil liberties would have deteriorated. Not that the southern Mediterranean governments pretend to do better; they just would not care. Impunity might prevail in a context in which surveillance techniques and fear politics consolidate authoritarian and regressive forces across the region and beyond, particularly as a response to new waves of region-wide protests that would involve violent repression. Migration and asylum policies would be more restrictive and, in Europe, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic acts would be on the rise. In return, southern Mediterranean societies might perceive their European counterparts as decadent, arrogant and unfriendly. All in all, security, terrorism, energy and border control would be the only topics that could still bring some countries to cooperate in a strictly transactional form and often in very opaque settings.

## WHAT COULD BE DONE?

If the EU and its partners want to relaunch Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and integration, they will have to fundamentally revise the approach they have used so far. The diagnosis of regional problems will have to be adjusted to the realities, not to short-term calculations. The EU and its partners must listen to the people of the southern Mediterranean countries who are calling for good governance, representative systems and functioning states. The EU will have to reflect upon its vision of what it wants its neighbourhood to look like, the ideal scenario still being that of a ring of well-governed, prosperous, friendly and stable countries. But how can this be achieved, when unfolding developments point in the opposite direction? How can this trend be reverted? The EU should assess whether current policies contribute to getting closer to this goal. Its partners in the south should also engage in the discussion on whether the status quo is sustainable, or at risk of facing new waves of social and political unrest if there is no prospect of change. If the EU and its partners choose to do “more of the same”, to continue on “autopilot” or to implement only “cosmetic changes”, then we cannot expect results different from those obtained after 25 years of Euro-Mediterranean initiatives. It is not that the situation will remain stable, but rather that it will most probably deteriorate, following the continuing trend of the past quarter of a century.

Guaranteeing peace and security in the Mediterranean region will require more than merely the traditional “hard security” approach that focuses on the development of military instruments and defence cooperation. The EU’s own integration process shows that, in order to build an area of peace and security, there are at least three prerequisites: 1) reconciliation between former warring neighbours,

2) normalisation of relations between all the countries involved, and 3) mutual recognition of borders. The EU has the potential leverage to push for such dynamics in its immediate southern neighbourhood. However, it has shown very limited – if not a non-existent – political will to coordinate its policies and to show unity in its response to challenges affecting its core interests. One domain where this has been more evident than elsewhere is the promotion of good governance, the rule of law and the respect of human rights. As long as the EU's rhetoric is not matched with concrete actions in those fields and member states continue to send messages and implement actions that contradict those goals, the impact will be limited at best.

European institutions, governments and societies are engaged in major transformational projects related to the European Green Deal and the digital agenda. If partners in the southern and eastern Mediterranean are also able to benefit from those transformations, in line with what is proposed in the Joint Communication on the southern neighbourhood, this could induce positive change in boosting the post-pandemic economic recovery, while advancing the transition towards a more sustainable future by preserving the environment and natural resources. Aiming for sustainable economic development and innovation is particularly relevant, given that the Mediterranean is already a major hotspot of climate change, with implications for all riparian countries in the years to come. For positive change to happen, all partners around the Mediterranean will need to take a leap in terms of investing in knowledge development and the creation of opportunities through enhanced economic collaboration. That would require a revolutionary approach towards expanding entrepreneurship and women's advancement, investing in and engaging with youth, as well as promoting free and fair trade across the Mediterranean and with other regions.

Cities were and are the nodes connecting this region, the gates to their respective countries, the best examples of millennia-old

Mediterranean cosmopolitanism. The region has rapidly been urbanised, and this implies many challenges that individual local administrations cannot tackle alone. In this context, a new challenge has been added: whereas digitalisation and decarbonisation have been boosted by COVID-19, international mobility has significantly decreased, thus affecting key economic sectors in the Mediterranean such as tourism and international events. The mounting inequalities in cities – as well as between cities and peripheral regions – have fuelled social unrest in the past. In post-pandemic times, such a risk is only increasing.

On a more positive note, Mediterranean cities have also been looking at each other to emulate the best possible policies to face the pandemic and other crises, and have shown a willingness to collaborate that is often missing at the interstate level. In 2020, natural and man-made disasters also hit iconic Mediterranean cities such as Beirut and Izmir, triggering a natural reflex of solidarity and cooperation. Historically, cities concentrate a significant part of a country's innovation, research and cultural creation and, thus, are called to be not only the stage but also the actors to bring societies from both shores of the Mediterranean closer to each other.

In the last decade, the Mediterranean region has seen a significant increase of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people. This triggers societal tensions, but also movements of solidarity. The Mediterranean has always been crossed in all directions by people seeking a safe shelter from aggressions, by entrepreneurs that aim at increasing their economic horizons and by workers searching for new opportunities. Nevertheless, international migration has become a politically loaded issue, legal pathways have proven ineffective and smugglers and criminal networks have profited from the desperation of individuals and families, both in and outside the EU.

Global, regional and national attempts have failed so far to adequately manage these



challenges (security, governance, sustainable development, territorial and social cohesion, promoting opportunities for all and managing migration flows). Governments on both sides of the Mediterranean have been overwhelmed by the scale of the multilayered challenges and their political ramifications. While the temptation of turning their backs on each other, looking elsewhere or focusing exclusively on domestic issues may be high – this is the scenario we have depicted as looser bonds – geographic proximity and interpersonal connections may be strong enough to avoid these bonds from untying. Therefore, the key question is: how can these bonds be made to deliver?

3

## **The future agenda with Euro-Mediterranean testimonials**



3.1.

## Political bonds

# Twenty-five years of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation: Political stocktaking in an adverse context

By

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The diagnosis that prompted the launch of the Barcelona Process in 1995 is still valid, but not the instruments designed to boost regional cooperation and reduce the gaps between the two shores of the Mediterranean. European stability as a whole, and not only that of the southern European countries, is linked to the development of the southern and eastern Mediterranean and the creation of an “area of peace, shared prosperity, and social and cultural exchanges”.

For the past 25 years, the Euro-Mediterranean project’s approach has struggled to adapt to a changing international and regional context. From the outset, it had to deal with crises caused by the contamination of frozen conflicts (Palestine/Israel and the western Sahara). In more recent years, new ones have been added (Syria, Libya and Yemen), generating increasingly interconnected conflicts and forming “conflict clusters”.

European policies towards the Mediterranean are conditioned by short-term contexts, making it difficult to address the root causes of instability in the region. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the EU focus shifted to security, justifying enhanced collaboration with southern Mediterranean countries that were presented as “security providers”. From 2008 onwards, the overlapping of crises on both shores, due to a wide array of causes (financial crisis, anti-authoritarian revolts, armed conflicts, the emergence of jihadist terrorism, migration crises, growing Euroscepticism, etc.) revealed the EU’s weakness in acting as a “crisis manager” in its southern neighbourhood. The impact of the 2015-2016 so-called “refugee crisis” in the eastern Mediterranean on the internal politics of EU member states prompted a re-securitised approach.

One of the merits of the Barcelona Process was to go beyond financial and trade relations, which until then had articulated the EU’s Mediterranean policy. This was

approached through comprehensive cooperation, including the political and security, cultural and human, and economic and financial dimensions. Another positive element was to underline the importance of civil society – albeit in a subordinate position – as a key actor in the process.

Despite its limitations, one of the main achievements of the Barcelona Process has been the survival of a multilateral framework in which all countries in the region, including those at odds with each other, sit and talk. However, the initial political impetus has been replaced by the Union for the Mediterranean as a forum for technical meetings between senior officials with limited capacity for political influence.



The ambitious objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership have been reduced and diluted over time. The complexity of the institutional architecture, the proliferation of initiatives and the overlapping of unconnected frameworks of cooperation have led to the dispersion of efforts, duplication and, at times, a lack of coherence.

One reason for the meagre balance sheet of the Barcelona Process is the asymmetry of interests in the Mediterranean agendas of southern and northern countries. The EU prioritises market liberalisation and the control of migratory flows, while southern Mediterranean countries are focused on gaining unimpeded access to European markets for their exports, favouring mobility and visa facilitation and preventing human rights from being on the agenda, which is perceived as interference.

The EU's priority has not been to promote political reform in its southern neighbourhood, but to guarantee stability and security in the short term. Not surprisingly, the EU has failed in its attempt at politically transforming southern countries in terms of democratisation, human rights and good governance. One of the consequences of this approach has been the loss of attractiveness of the EU's proposed governance model in its immediate geopolitical environment.

Beyond rhetorical declarations, authoritarian regimes were and are often considered the best guarantors of short-term stability. Focusing the priorities of the bilateral agenda on the control of migration flows, "refugee containment" and the fight against terrorism gives a lifeline to regimes that use their status as "security providers" to neutralise pressures related to human rights and democratisation. Clearly, the priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean process are disconnected from the expectations of southern populations, which have been visible in the mobilisations that have been sweeping the region since 2011.

The lack of progress towards good governance has been reflected in the lack of progress in regional integration processes around the Mediterranean. Although the EU remains the main trading partner of its Mediterranean neighbours and an important provider of bilateral aid, there is a growing presence of other regional and extra-regional actors competing to increase their influence, such as Russia, China, Turkey, the Arab Gulf countries, etc. This is indicative of the deterioration of the EU's political influence in the Euro-Mediterranean region, due mainly to the incapacity of adopting common positions, with certain EU members often trying to advance their own national interests, even if that means undermining collective efforts.

The depoliticisation of the UfM agenda contrasts with the repoliticisation of Arab societies since the 2011 Arab Uprisings, and their emphasis on the rejection of authoritarianism. Although protests were

temporarily put on hold due to the pandemic, the effects of confinements, border closures and the slowdown in economic activity have accentuated the socioeconomic fragility of Arab states. The high levels of indebtedness states are expected to emerge with from the crisis will condition their budgetary capacity to address the root causes of inequality in southern Mediterranean societies, paving the way for the cycle of protests to continue if their citizens' expectations of welfare and social justice are not met by renewing social contracts.

Any attempt to relaunch Euro-Mediterranean cooperation requires a rebalancing of priorities on migration and counter-terrorism with other policies that address the root causes of instability. The defence of the regional cooperation framework must be accompanied by a reflection on the best ways to break with past inertia and avoid falling into more of the same, addressing some of the problems of previous initiatives. For example, it is necessary to go beyond short-term concerns and a securitised approach that dilutes other aspects of collaboration. It is also important to avoid launching initiatives from the North and then trying to get the South to take ownership of them.

The EU would do well to promote projects of common interest to address transnational challenges in areas such as public health, civil protection, environmental challenges, sustainable development and digitalisation, among others. Regional cooperation must take into account the widespread expectations for change in southern Mediterranean societies, which are often shared by social actors from the northern shore (such as overcoming economic imbalances, regional disparities, social justice, etc.). This entails using the UfM as a catalyst for civil society and youth initiatives, including credible policies to support mobility between the two shores.

In order to promote the construction of a Euro-Mediterranean space, it would be beneficial to put in place a bottom-up



approach that pays special attention to civil society. This requires multiplying contacts with new social movements (after identifying and mapping genuine civil society organisations), further promoting youth and university exchanges at different levels (students and teachers, joint academic and training programmes, expanding the Erasmus Mundus programme, Euro-Arab University, etc.). Collaboration should also extend to work with local NGOs, associations and decentralised authorities, in order to make initiatives more inclusive.

Any progress in the construction of a shared space of peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean requires the promotion of democracy, the expansion of freedoms,

the reduction of inequalities, greater integration of young people into the labour market and a reduction of gaps in education and gender equality. The EU's involvement in post-pandemic economic recovery processes in southern Mediterranean countries is crucial to progress towards this goal. This support must listen to southern societies and meet their expectations for socio-economic improvement and democracy, breaking with the inertia of an agenda subordinated to security issues and sending signals that reinforce confidence and respond to the demands of mobility.



# Testimonial by **Adnane Addioui**

Co-Founder of the Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (MCISE), Member of the Special Commission on the Development Model by King Mohammed VI,

**Morocco**



Social entrepreneur Adnane Addiouï from Morocco focuses on sustainable growth in the region and believes that to “make Euro-Med relations work, you need a mix of solid partnerships instead of patronising, and you need genuine collaboration and thinking of common interests.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

When former French President Nicolas Sarkozy envisaged launching the Mediterranean Union, Germany wanted to join as well. So the Mediterranean also matters to nonriparian countries. To me, the Mediterranean is the cradle of civilisation. There has always been a link across the *Mare Nostrum* through civilisation, also regarding transformative dynamics. The Mediterranean is a whole ecosystem as well, but its biodiversity is suffering. The ongoing environmental decline of the Mediterranean is not sufficiently highlighted and we need to make more efforts to protect it.

**2. What is your assessment of the current state and the potential of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

In general, the Euro-Mediterranean relationship should move from a patronising approach to real collaboration – dialogue on an equal level and among partners. This also involves choosing the right scale of comparison between the Global North and the Global South. Compare same with same – for instance, the cities of Lille (France) with Algiers, but not Barcelona with Alexandria.

Another weakness of the relationship are existing stereotypes. The Maghreb is often seen as a region with low-skilled migrants, emigrating mostly to France, Spain and Italy which are closest geographically. Such narratives and stereotypes also put a

strain on our relations, making dialogue at eye level difficult. In a nutshell, to make Euro-Med relations work, you need a mix of solid partnerships instead of patronising, and you need genuine collaboration and thinking of common interests.

**3. Where do you see the main challenges for the region now and in the years to come?**

During the past year, it became obvious that COVID-19 concerns everyone alike. Hence, the access to vaccines and cure is a primary concern for every country. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau underlined the importance of collaboration in combatting the virus, pointing out that the stability of Canada depended on the stability of the world. At the same time,

the COVAX alliance, the global scheme to provide vaccines for poorer countries, faces major challenges such as critical shortages in supply, that impede an equal roll-out of vaccines also in the Mediterranean region.

The current situation underlines the need to discuss policy changes from a human perspective. Your prosperity does not mean my lack of prosperity, and that if we both prosper, it is of added value for everyone – ranging from sustainability to inclusion. Therefore, the policies to be implemented by both sides must focus on people's real needs and tackle issues by putting people first.

#### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

We need to move from a development to an empowerment narrative – empowering people is key. The EU needs to put this first in its narrative and actions. Most EU development programmes have to go through big European partners to be eligible. In my opinion, the impact on the ground with this approach is unfortunately minimal, and foreign staff lacks the knowledge of local languages and cultures. Instead, we need to create systems where everybody can work together and leverage resources to be more efficient, monitor results and hold everybody accountable – countries and governments on both sides. Furthermore, development must be inclusive. Here, accessibility and the Internet are real challenges. Development must not leave anyone behind, either from rural Germany or from rural Syria.

#### 5. Which of these challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together in the future?

Again, policies should target individuals first of all. For instance, create links between rural Germany and rural Morocco, between fast growing start-ups in Paris and Algiers or Alexandria, because the future is human-centred. Policy developments should follow this trend. Through these links, we can be more efficient, save resources, develop systems of accountability to be more transparent and give people access and information, especially in an era of disinformation. This is a challenge for the future – inclusive data and individuals who empower themselves. Empower them to make their voices heard and protect if necessary, because freedom of speech is not ensured everywhere. Equip them with tools and ways to develop concrete actions instead of only policy recommendations – it is by doing things that we learn more.

#### 6. Can you share a success story in the region with us?

In 2019/2020, the Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (MCISE) opened a pop-up store with Moroccan social entrepreneurs in Paris. Focusing on sustainability and inclusion, "Mayamin" featured Moroccan products aimed at creating a social impact. On offer were local, natural or recycled products made by Moroccan craftsmen. We wanted the store to be a place

of discovery, learning, promotion and exchange around social innovation in Morocco. Through this concept, we want to change consumption on a small scale and offer new consumer experiences. Unfortunately, the store was only intended for one month, but the reception of the concept was impressive with several French government officials attending. It is an idea that can easily be scaled up and replicated elsewhere. We also seek to further expand MCISE programmes to Europe. For instance, a programme on problem solving in schools, applying to Moroccan and German students alike. So, scaling innovation is what brings us citizens closer to each other across the Mediterranean and in both directions.

As a summary, the vision of hope of the Arab Spring was that it ignited an environment of possibilities which was not foreseeable at the time. Many would say that the Arab Spring has failed, which I do not agree with – no system change comes overnight. The challenge is not just to keep that spark of hope, but to sustain it and create ripple effects that benefit everyone. I believe that the more we can share ideas, the more we can connect with each other, and the more we can create.

# Testimonial by **Ángeles Espinosa**

Journalist specialising in the Arab and Islamic world and Senior  
Correspondent for the Spanish newspaper El País,

**Spain / United Arab Emirates**





“As a journalist in the region for several decades, I have the impression that, despite talks and meetings, there is a ‘non-dialogue’ – everyone talks in a different language and expects a different result,” concludes Ángeles Espinosa, Senior Correspondent for the Spanish newspaper *El País*.

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

I always took for granted that the Mediterranean is part of myself and my idea of Europe. It was related to childhood memories and holidays. Later, while working as a journalist and particularly because of my first posting in Beirut, I realised that the Mediterranean was not only a holiday destination. It was a natural border with countries in the South, and there was also a development gap between the northern and southern shores. I understood how the sea was used as a uniting metaphor by politicians, but for me it was rather keeping us apart. In recent years, and particularly since the Arab Uprisings, I fear

that this gap has become bigger. For me, the Mediterranean has lost its initial idyllic meaning and has become a mirror of our own problems.

**2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

Although geographical proximity gives us a chance to understand each other, there has been much talk and little progress on both sides. We need a common framework to understand each other. This proves very difficult, as long as there is no shared basic political understanding and countries in the southern Mediterranean do not have a democratic system with civic participation. As a

journalist in the region for several decades, I have the impression that, despite talks and meetings, there is a “non-dialogue” – everyone talks in a different language and expects a different result. To caricaturise the situation, northern Mediterranean countries mainly expect commercial deals with the South, while the South expects all kinds of economic help, but refuses to commit to reforms.

**3. Where do you see the main challenges for the Euro-Mediterranean region now and in the years to come?**

Other than politics and the way countries are ruled, there is a problem of citizenship and

a lack of civic participation. For countries in the southern Mediterranean, the concept of citizenship with civil rights is less developed or non-existent. The main challenge – and also an opportunity – is demographics and young populations in the South. They all need to have jobs, a horizon for their country and a possibility for their hopes to come true. As long as this is not solved, migration towards Europe will continue, putting a lot of people's lives at risk, alongside rising extremism and racism. It is a shame that we cannot find a sustainable and common solution.

For years, European countries (but not only those countries) have supported autocrats for the sake of stability. But the longer an autocrat is in power, the more risk there is that the transition will not be peaceful, especially given the complete lack of civil society organisation. People's patience is coming to an end. Especially younger generations who are aware of what is going on, encouraged by the rapid spread of information and communication through social media. All in all, young populations, immediate communication and the political system produce a very explosive mix.

COVID-19 and vaccine procurement is a very practical example of cooperation. Many countries in the southern Mediterranean are trying to obtain vaccines. There is the COVAX initiative to ensure equitable access to vaccines worldwide, but the overall feeling is that there has not been sufficient action. If even countries in the Gulf region with

enough financial resources are unable to secure sufficient vaccines and collaborate with China instead, I cannot imagine the situation in Egypt. As Europeans, we should “walk the talk” in this area of collaboration and show goodwill.

#### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

Citizens should be given a chance to participate and to have a normal life, ideally in their home countries. Hardly anybody wants to emigrate forever to a different country, in the way it is currently happening. For instance, Egyptians seeking a job in Europe is not new in itself, but when I was posted in Cairo in the early '90s, they were not crossing the Mediterranean in a boat like today. Even if Egypt was a poorer country than today, there was still some hope because of the growing tourism industry and opportunities for the youth. When I first heard about Egyptians drowning in the Mediterranean a few years ago, I knew something was broken in the country. We have to invest in young people – education, jobs and opportunities.

#### 5. Which of these challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together in the future?

Firstly, from the European side, promoting the idea of citizenship and a particular focus on young people. Secondly, COVID-19 is an opportunity to re-establish trust. Thirdly, and most importantly, in the field of migration

where both sides have to work together. Challenges cannot be solved only with the EU giving money to countries for them to stop their citizens from leaving. This is a buy-out which is probably not even ethical. Again, working together on a new model is going to be difficult, as there are not equals sitting around the table – some elected leaders representing democratic countries and others representing autocracies. Dynamics and capacities to deal with issues and decision-making are not similar. Ultimately, autocracies can blackmail Europe by opening or closing doors to uncontrolled immigration, to exert further pressure or to obtain more funding without substantive changes. Here, Europe has to change its approach towards progress, based on what citizens think. People are well prepared and they know what would be better for their own country. Unfortunately, many of them are victims of the “brain drain” and, feeling hopeless, have already left their home countries. It is like a perpetual cycle.

#### 6. Can you share a success story in the region with us?

Undoubtedly, the women's movement, which is the only movement I saw developing across all countries in the southern Mediterranean. The lack of freedom of association is common to all of the countries, maybe with the exception of Lebanon and Tunisia.

Being considered as “second-class citizens”, women were

off the political radar. However, throughout the years, women have organised grassroots movements in most countries in the region. They started working very modestly, building structures to help widows or divorced women who had no place to go. In sum, social issues that the government did not care about in the past and which had huge implications for society, potentially leading to abandoned kids or prostitution. The reactions were quite different: some countries tried to co-opt the movements to be perceived as very pro-feminist, while others realised the potential danger because the movement was not controlled by the system. Also, it was very difficult for the security establishment to penetrate the movements in mostly patriarchal countries. The women's movement is the only transversal group which is not related to any ethnicity or sectarian group, but which nevertheless has managed to cut across all areas of society and to have some loosely organised system. Even before the Arab Uprisings, they managed to create an impact and to change laws in many countries. For instance, rendering polygamy more difficult, lifting up the value of women in society as written in the Sharia, questions of inheritance, testimonies in courts and insurance. This has been little known, because public attention was more focused on "big politics".

For European countries, it makes sense to invest in these women. But it is also very challenging, because foreign money

is viewed with suspicion and some countries punish women and human rights activists extremely harshly, sometimes even more harshly than men. It is an interesting path to explore, because a change of values from the bottom up, from the family, might have a better and more long-term impact than political parties or promoting elections in countries with no independent judiciary and no free press.

# Testimonial by **Selim Kharrat**

Co-Founder and President of the  
NGO *Al Bawsala* ("The Compass"),

**Tunisia**



Motivated by the Tunisian revolution, *Al Bawsala* President and Co-Founder Selim Kharrat highlights: “Ensuring the transparency of debates was of utmost importance for us, so we set up a parliamentary observatory for the National Constituent Assembly in Tunisia.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

First of all, identity and belonging – to a space, a common heritage, history, identity and culture. Stemming from Tunisia’s geographic situation, I even feel more Mediterranean than African. I have had the opportunity to visit several Mediterranean countries and every time I have felt at home – be it in Spain, Italy, Morocco or Lebanon.

Unfortunately, the Mediterranean is also a grave for many Africans, including Tunisians, who attempted a crossing in the hope of a better future. In addition, the Mediterranean is increasingly turning into an environmental catastrophe, especially regarding the water quality and extreme pollution of Mediterranean coasts.

**2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

Among the strengths are shared languages, which allow us to exchange with Mediterranean citizens from very different countries. For instance, I can understand Maltese because there are common words with our Tunisian *Derja* language. Similarities in culture and a shared history mean we are connected in the past and will be connected in the future. We also have a common destiny and, along with this, the environmental concern. This implies that if we do not act on a risk that affects us all, we will all have to pay the price. Economic exchanges between different countries in this area are also a strength, and they allow for important solid and lasting links.

Existing disparities between the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean are part of the weaknesses. Disparities in terms of economic and human development, freedom of movement for people and the inequalities related to it. Another weakness, or even a risk, are regional conflicts and aspirations by some regional actors to gain more power and visibility in other parts of the Mediterranean. For instance, Turkey’s aspirations in the context of the Libyan conflict, resulting in tensions with other countries in the region.

**3. What are the main challenges for Tunisia now and in the years to come?**

Reflecting beyond my field of expertise, migration represents the main challenge for Tunisia.

It is coupled with the increasing pressure by the EU on Tunisia to act as Border Police, an issue having a major impact on negotiations between Tunisia and the European Union on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). By its geographic situation, Tunisia is one of the doorways from North Africa to Europe, only separated by the Mediterranean Sea. Tunisia does not have the means, the technology or the know-how to fulfil the role of the Border Police. Not to speak of the legitimacy to restrict the freedom of movement of its own citizens. During the negotiations for DCFTA, both parties agreed on free trade and the free movement of goods and services. However, this cannot go without the free movement of people. For example, a Tunisian businessman has no guarantee of obtaining a visa to do business in Europe. At the same time, Europeans can enter Tunisia freely, sometimes even with only their identity card. I consider this as a kind of inequality. Even more so, as it contradicts the European narrative, describing relations with Tunisia as a win-win deal between equal partners. In reality, this is not the case. We need to have a common understanding and a common perception of what we really mean by “free movement of people”.

#### 4. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together in the future?

In the specific context of the pandemic, health issues represent a common challenge and

COVID-19 affects all countries without discrimination. Yet, it also represents an opportunity to enhance collaboration and to tighten links between countries in the region. Likewise for migration, which also holds opportunities for European countries with a shortage of workforce or competences and increasingly ageing societies. At the same time, there are countries in the southern Mediterranean with very young populations, willing to work hard and looking for jobs. It should be possible to match both, and to see migration as a solution and not only a security problem between the two shores. When talking about migration, we should not forget that this is also linked to other challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the field of the economy, politics and climate. I see the environmental question among the biggest challenges for the Mediterranean in the future.

#### 5. Can you share a success story with us?

I will share my own experience with *Al Bawsala*. The idea to set up a parliamentary monitoring for Tunisia started in Paris in 2011, after the revolution. Together with friends, I wanted to become involved in the Tunisian transition, a historical moment. We were all active bloggers, which was only possible because we were in France and had access to the Internet and information on Tunisia. My blog on Tunisian politics and the dictatorship was censored in 2010.

We shared the same observa-

tion: after the revolution, the new political elite that emerged, thanks to the first free elections for the National Constituent Assembly in October 2011, were new political women and men, opponents of former President Ben Ali. It is understandable that they were not willing to share information about their political activities before, as it would have exposed them to major risks during the 23 years of dictatorship.

However, we would not accept this non-transparency to continue in the new political context. Ensuring the transparency of debate was of utmost importance for us, so we set up a parliamentary observatory for the National Constituent Assembly in Tunisia. The NGO *Al Bawsala* was launched later for further projects and observatories.

We launched the NGO in 2012 and had the opportunity to have the German parliamentary monitoring organisation, “Parlamentwatch” (“Parliament Watch”), as our main partner for the first two years. “Parlamentwatch” was doing in Germany what we planned for Tunisia. We had interesting and fruitful exchanges of knowledge, and a team member spent two months in Germany with “Parlamentwatch” in order to learn from them. Collaborating with the German NGO helped a lot technically, in order to construct our online observatories in Tunisia and they also introduced us to the global network of parliamentary monitoring organisations (PMOs).

#### 6. Tunisia is often cited as a positive example of the



**Arab Spring and many citizens in the MENA region would like their country to follow a similar course. How would you assess the situation in Tunisia ten years afterwards?**

I can understand my fellow Syrians or Libyans citing Tunisia as an example, because the situation in their home countries is very harsh and difficult. Unlike other countries in the region, which encountered revolutionary movements, the main success of Tunisia is that the political and civil society elites succeeded in discussing instead of killing each other. This is closely linked to the historical sense of compromise in Tunisia and a political practice based on compromise and negotiation. It is also thanks to the extraordinary work of civil society actors, especially the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet that received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, for their mediation efforts: the General Labour Union, the Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts, the Tunisian Human Rights League and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers. This shows two important Tunisian features: the trade union is a historical organisation which participated in Tunisia's independence movement, and Tunisia was also the first Arab country with a National Human Rights Commission. Stemming from these particularities, it is difficult to compare Tunisia to other countries. In my opinion, Tunisia succeeded, because it relied on its particularities and strengths. Last but not least, Tunisia is not a rich country in terms of natu-

ral resources, such as Libya, so we are not very important to regional countries and international actors. This allowed us to discuss our problems and find solutions by ourselves, which was a huge opportunity. It is not because Tunisians are stronger or cleverer, but linked to the specific situation of Tunisia's political, economic and social sphere.

# Testimonial by **Veysel Ok**

Free speech and press freedom lawyer,

**Turkey**



For Veysel Ok, free speech and press freedom lawyer having defended among others German-Turkish *Die Welt* journalist Deniz Yücel, the EU must be more active: “Especially on the institutional level, we cannot claim that Europe was able to produce sufficient and rapid answers or solutions to the continuous erosion of democracy and rule of law in Turkey.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

For me, the Mediterranean always means a place to live, the sea, good food and of course nice people. However, lately associations stemming from current conflicts such as gas, war, the Cyprus issue and Libya come to my mind as well.

**2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the European-Mediterranean relations?**

Unfortunately, Europe was not able to create a welfare society with a strong legal system

attaching importance to liberal rights in the Mediterranean region, like it did in its Centre and the North. We cannot say that it was able to produce sufficient institutional solutions for problems in the fields of law and democracy. For decades, it did not come up with a solution to such a fundamental problem as the Cyprus issue. This is a weak spot of the European Union.

On a more positive note, we could mention the funding the EU provides for the development of countries in the Mediterranean basin and the ample support to solve the infrastructural problems of cities.

**3. Where do you see the biggest challenge for Turkey and the European-Mediterranean region now and in the future?**

My area of expertise is freedom of expression. Regarding this issue, Turkey is one of the most troubled countries in Europe and the Mediterranean region. Especially on the institutional level, we cannot claim that Europe has been able to produce sufficient and rapid answers or solutions to the continuous erosion of democracy and rule of law in Turkey.

Europe needs to decide on that issue. Despite everything, Turkey is still a part of Europe

and a member of the Council of Europe. For this reason, issues rooted in Turkey are not only problems of Turkey but also of Europe. If we approach the topic from that perspective, namely if we see Turkey's problems as part of Europe's internal affairs, then our chances of finding more powerful solutions increase. Looking to the future, Europe also needs to show more solidarity with Turkish citizens and associations that defend European values. It should not be forgotten that the policies of oppression and persecution directed against them on the part of Turkey's government can be overcome with solidarity.

#### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

The European Union is one of the best unions ever established by humankind, for instance regarding the removal of borders and legal mechanisms to protect fundamental rights. Nevertheless, the EU needs a more effective structure to defend peaceful policies in the Mediterranean region, as well as in Turkey. There is a need to establish common policies on issues such as military, defence and foreign policy, human rights and ecology. This depends on the ability of the EU's institutional structures to remain effective and up to date, and on the authorities' capacity to make faster decisions. Unfortunately, with its current structure, the EU is far from being a major power in the Mediterranean.

#### 5. What are challenges that the EU and Mediterranean countries have to tackle together and how are they addressed?

I do not believe that Europe has a common Mediterranean policy. If we take the issue of Libya, Germany's Libya policy is different from France's policy. Or if we examine the Cyprus issue, we see that many European countries pursue policies that are different from each other. Here I think the topic should cease to be a matter of nation states, but instead become a European issue. In other words, neither Germany nor France should have a separate strategy for the Mediterranean, but Europe as a whole needs a Mediterranean policy. The solution to this is the further strengthening of the European Union and the reduction of the authority of the nation states. This will happen when the institutions of the European Union become stronger, more organised and more effective.

#### 6. Can you share with us a dream about European-Mediterranean relations?

I dream of a Mediterranean where the borders between Mediterranean countries and Europe are removed, where liberal rights are recognised, problems such as the Cyprus issue resolved on the basis of justice, wars come to an end and everyone lives peacefully in their own country. Actually, this is not a dream, but a situation that can come true with real solidarity and the demand for peace.

3.2.

## Generational bonds

# Youth in the Mediterranean: Answering today's demands for tomorrow's needs

By

**Moussa Bourekba,**

Researcher,

CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs

“Bread, freedom and human dignity”. Those were the demands of the massive protests that took place ten years ago in the MENA region. What were known as the “Arab Uprisings” coincided with the rise of anti-austerity movements in southern Europe. On both shores of the Mediterranean, youngsters were over-represented. While most of them were not connected to traditional political actors (political parties, trade unions, etc.), they were able to mobilise tens of thousands of youngsters who shared similar grievances and hopes for change.

A decade later, the landscape has dramatically changed. In North Africa, what started as a “democratic spring” gradually turned into a military summer and in a never-ending authoritarian winter: Libya and Syria are still in the midst of a civil war and international conflicts; the democratic experience in Egypt was violently interrupted by a *coup*, while the elites in Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco kept struggling to control public rage. In the northern Mediterranean, the Great Recession has hit young people the hardest. In Croatia, Greece, Italy and Spain, youth unemployment rates exceeded 50 % in certain years. While the current pandemic has the world’s attention, the protests taking place in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan and Tunisia show that the youth are determined to struggle to see their demands met. Those demands remain unchanged: they concern economic (“bread”), political and social (“freedom and dignity”) inclusion.

Research has shown that the youth in this region are at the intersection of interconnected processes of exclusion: economic exclusion feeds social exclusion, which translates into low rates of civic and political engagement. As a matter of fact, most of the teenagers who were protesting ten years ago are now *trying* to enter adulthood. But they are finding it difficult to do so, as they are faced with similar obstacles as those experienced by their elders: the lack of adequate jobs prevents them from economic independence, which prevents them from becoming adults – that is to say, fully

emancipated from their parents (through home ownership, marriage, etc.). Put simply, getting a decent job is a prerequisite to starting adult life. In the southern and eastern Mediterranean, where two out of three people are under 30 years of age, and where youth unemployment rates are the world’s highest, being young is not a *life stage* between childhood and adulthood. It has rather become a *condition* in which millions of young men and women find themselves trapped: they are neither teenagers (they have completed their education) nor adults (they are not yet independent). As a result of that, they are in a state of “waithood”. What is more, the patterns of youth unemployment in this part of the world are unique: the risks of unemployment rise with the level of education. The more educated, the less employed. This means not only a terrible waste of human capital – which translates into high brain drain rates, but also a potentially devastating feeling of frustration and resentment against society.

It would be unfair to state that nothing has been done for the youth in the last decade. Governments drafted youth national policies and strategies to respond to youth demands, while development and aid agencies implemented thousands of initiatives aimed at fostering youth inclusion in many fields, such as education, employment and civic engagement. However, they have failed to reduce the levels of youth unemployment, because these policies and strategies were essentially composed of sets of measures that try to compensate for structural deficiencies. While many of these measures primarily targeted the youth, structural reforms were very limited. Training programmes cannot solve the significant failures of educational systems; youth entrepreneurship cannot absorb the massive flux of unemployed youngsters, and youth political engagement has no chance of increasing if the authoritarian rule remains unchallenged.

Looking to the future, meeting youth demands would require not only an assessment of the policy failures, but also a deep



rethinking of the policy responses that could improve their conditions. In this respect, governments and policymakers in this area should not systematically dissect youth policies from wider public policies: the problems that affect the youth are not always exclusive to this segment of the population. They are rather the outcome of structural, economic and political failures that affect society as a whole. Building on this, youth policies cannot be effective if they overlook structural failures, such as the quality of education and the inability to ensure the school-to-work transition; economies that are unable to offer the quality and quantity of job opportunities needed; the culture of nepotism and corruption and its impact on economic, political and social life; the restrictions of freedom and civil liberties and the lack of internal and external mobility. In other words, youth issues should be a pretext to address larger issues. Likewise, the interconnection between the aforementioned processes of exclusion should call for integrated and holistic strategies to foster youth inclusion.

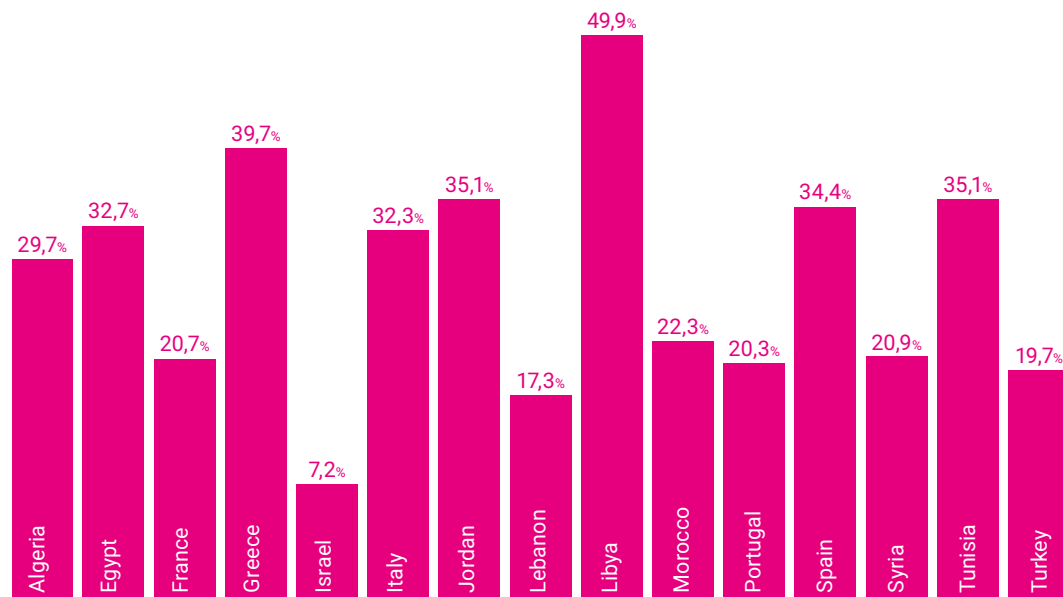
The last decade has been marked by a formidable amount of research and action-oriented projects targeting youth. International organisations, research institutions and governments have now several sources of data that help them to understand youth demands, conditions and perceptions. It has been the decade of *agenda setting*. We should now hope that the current decade will be that of *formulation* and *adoption* of the available policy options. In this process, it is of crucial importance to include the youth, in order to understand their grievances and to take into account their views. Including them in such processes is key, if the aim is to restore a feeling of confidence of young citizens in their constituency.

As the pandemic has forced governments to prioritise security concerns over the pressing youth problems, one should not forget that the underlying conditions that led youngsters to take to the streets ten

years ago – authoritarianism, a call for a new social contract and frustration – have only since deteriorated. Bearing this in mind, addressing youth demands is more urgent than ever before. Without that, those who endlessly repeat that “youth is the future”, without improving their conditions in the present, may quell a new wave of protests.

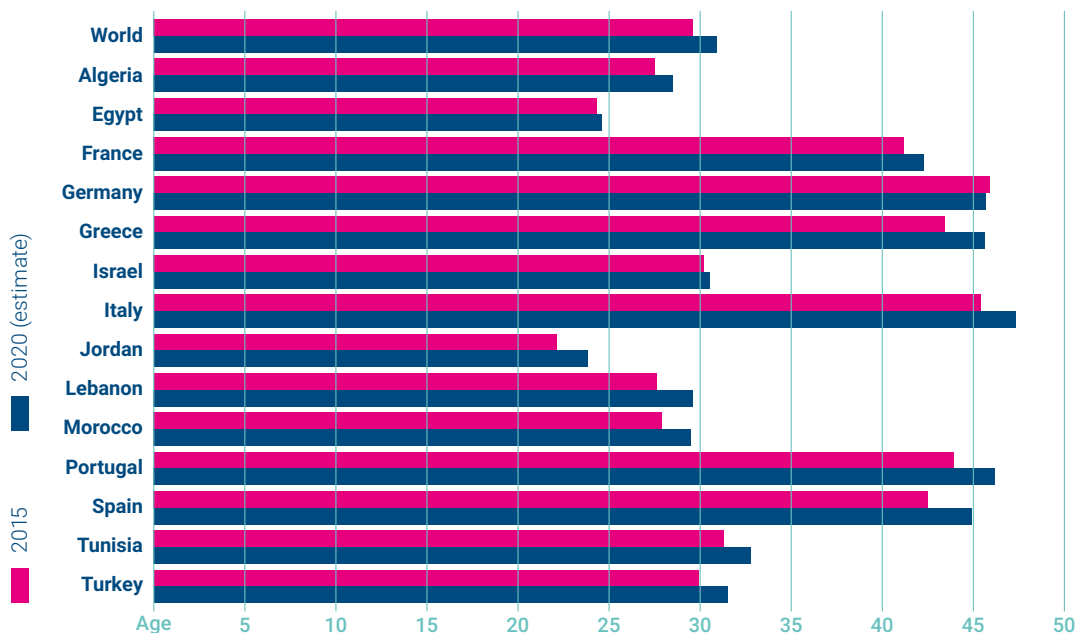
### Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) for selected countries in the Mediterranean (2018, in %)

Source: IEMed, Mediterranean Yearbook 2020; ILO.



### Median age in the Euro-Mediterranean region (selected countries, 2015 & 2020)

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects 2019.



# Testimonial by **Azita Berar Awad**

Policy Director of the Global Labor Organization (GLO) and Senior Fellow  
at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva,

**Egypt / Switzerland**



Azita Berar Awad, an International Expert and former UN Senior Director on economic and social inclusion policies, with a call for action for stakeholders on both shores of the Mediterranean: “Both sides need to go a step further from engaging in interesting discussions and projects towards scaling them up into mainstream policies – otherwise they remain just successful pilot projects without further fruits.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

I see it as a region with very important and deeply entrenched historical and cultural ties, forged by geographical proximity – sometimes conflictual, sometimes cooperative. For me, the Mediterranean goes beyond countries which border the Mediterranean Sea. It also includes those that may not have direct access, but participate in the cultural and historical community of the Mediterranean.

**2. Where do you see the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

The approach of the Barcelona Process was innovative. Relationships between countries should be built on the principle of equality and dialogue among partners, rather than between rich and poor countries, donors and recipients or policy makers and policy takers. Nevertheless, the vision also acknowledged differences, especially socio-

economic and political ones. However, this it is not how the process evolved – a gap between vision and implementation. Negotiations are not carried out among partners who share the diagnostics of problems and exchange solutions, be it for migration or employment policy, for instance.

I see an imbalance in the multi-layer approach of the Barcelona Process. Naturally, priorities vary over time and depend on the geopolitical situation, but

it is apparent that the “securitisation” discourse has come to dominate the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Furthermore, economic integration was mostly narrowed down to trade liberalisation, without much consideration of the accompanying measures that have been lacking. As a consequence, expectations regarding job creation, social inclusion and protection could not be fulfilled in the southern Mediterranean. Other issues, like youth inclusion and gender equality, that received some attention, were not integrated into mainstream economic strategies. Overall, however, it would not be fair to make a sweeping statement about Euro-Mediterranean collaboration and the myriad of projects that were implemented in different countries and at various levels of cooperation. A number of these projects focused on very important issues and achieved some results that are promising examples of successful collaboration.

### 3. According to you, what are challenges for the region now and in the years to come?

Social and economic inequalities and in particular youth employment and youth participation remain challenges on both shores of the Mediterranean. The impact of COVID-19 on youth worldwide shows how fragile the situation is. The Arab youth uprisings sparked only two years after the financial crisis of 2008/09, which had led to an unprecedented youth unemployment crisis. Southern European youth encountered a

similar challenge, which lasts until this day. Movements claiming more social mobility and raising awareness regarding the difficult transition from school to work took place on both sides of the Mediterranean. Demands by the young generation revolved around the notions of decent work, dignity and democratic participation, that are transformational and allow for projection into the future. There have been some policy innovations, such as the European Youth Guarantee scheme, but these crisis response measures were not far-reaching enough to change the policy frameworks or to have a positive impact on the type of jobs available for the youth.

A decade after the “Arab Spring” uprisings, the political discourse has shifted from jubilation and a positive embrace of youth as agents of change, to depicting them as a burden on the economy and labour markets – or even as a security threat because of terrorism. After the uprisings, youth unemployment was considered as a failed delivery by the state and there was real willingness for change, while nowadays discourse is limited to containing youth problems.

Regarding the Barcelona Process, we need to ask if there is an integrated approach as such on both sides of the Mediterranean. With some EU countries preferring bilateral negotiations over a unified approach, and MENA countries not necessarily sharing the same priorities either. This undermines the community

method with a common diagnosis and shared space for dialogue. The region is encountering far more challenges and conflicts than ten years ago, making it even more difficult to prioritise economic inclusion and development agendas. But they have to be kept as the objectives.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

Reviving the Barcelona vision of equal partners! I also believe that the EU could better leverage its convening powers of dialogue and of voting in institutions or instances that are shaping macroeconomic policies, for example. On the one hand, there are positive examples of Euro-Mediterranean partnerships promoting a space for dialogue and projects with interesting, necessary and innovative objectives. On the other hand, regarding the policy frameworks where the EU has a leverage, whether at country level via country agreements, or as a global partner such as with the IMF, it has not been forthcoming in combatting social inequalities. Inequality remains the number one priority in the region.

### 5. Which challenges can the EU and Mediterranean countries face together?

Youth exchange offers promising perspectives, and not only in the framework of Erasmus+. I have already mentioned the common youth employment challenge and how worthwhile

it would be to share diagnostics and approaches, listen to each other and engage in a dialogue about joint solutions. This already occurs to some extent, but we need to acknowledge the shortcomings of current efforts and take into account legitimate criticisms.

Youth from both shores of the Mediterranean are again hit by COVID-19. Financing, pursuing or completing their education has become a challenge, as well as searching for jobs and entering the labour market. I think of the model of the European Youth Forum – funded by the European Commission, but where youth can manage and develop it, following a broad set of principles. Why not think of a Mediterranean Youth Forum? Not as a one-time conference as in the past, but as a continuous forum for ideas, suggestions and action. It is time to institutionalise the many initiatives for and with the youth, provide resources and turn them into a major platform, with participants from both sides of the Mediterranean, for a lasting impact.

There may be a silver lining of COVID-19, despite its major negative effects, human loss and socioeconomic fallout. It has revived debate and reflections on the alternative root causes and how to make people, societies and governments more resilient. COVID-19 is a challenge and an opportunity at the same time, for solidarity and partnerships. The European Investment Bank (EIB) might also extend its focus on post-pandemic recovery.

#### **6. To round off, can you share a success story on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation with us?**

This is neither an easy question, nor is there a uniform answer for all countries. I could think of pilot projects supported by the EIB in the region, with a focus on how to direct investments to sectors creating good quality employment. The projects focused on promising sectors in terms of quality job creation for youth and how to connect and adapt trade and investment packages negotiated at higher levels to these sectors. The basic idea is that projects might be small, but they can test hypotheses and identify channels to connect them with big investment schemes (sectoral approaches) for upscaling. There are many other interesting initiatives, for instance, on gender equality, on assessing and mapping the determinants of informality and on strengthening employment services.

Again, the question is how can the findings and lessons learnt be scaled up? This is where governments or public policies are responsible, so that successful pilot projects with significant results do not remain at an experimental stage. They need large-scale investments by state and private sector actors. Both sides need to go a step further from discussions and pilot projects, towards scaling them up into mainstream policies – otherwise they remain just successful pilot projects without bearing further fruit.



# Testimonial by **Raphaëlle Macaron**

Graphic Illustrator,

**Lebanon / France**



Raphaëlle Macaron, a Paris-based Lebanese illustrator, shares her concerns: “Mediterranean culture is mostly summarised as something beautiful, nice and exotic. However, I see this Orientalisation as problematic, specifically with Arab culture.”

#### 1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?

The Mediterranean is related to my childhood in Beirut, with a view of the sea from my parents’ house. Lebanon is a small country, where you can see the sea from almost everywhere – whether you are in the mountains or at the border. I might have taken this view for granted before leaving Lebanon. I quickly realised that the Mediterranean provided a foundation for me, not only psychologically and emotionally, but even more creatively. I am very drawn to it and most of my inspiration comes from scenes taking place by the sea.

#### 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?

Despite the Mediterranean being a rich mix of cultures and languages, not having a language barrier when I came to France made things easier. Moving here was a huge step forward for me – professionally, psychologically and personally.

One weakness, which is very defining of the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, is the way Mediterranean culture is diffused in Europe. It is mostly summarised as something beautiful, nice and exotic. However, I see this Orientalisation as problematic, specifically with Arab culture. On the one hand, it is widely diffused, very accessible, many people like it and have references to Arab culture. On the other hand, it is packaged in a way that it is difficult to get beyond that exotic signification. I encountered this a lot in my work. When work-

ing in Beirut, I presented myself as an illustrator and did not realise how much the fact that I was Lebanese would define my work. When I started my first projects in France, I realised that it was linked to me being an Arab woman in France. I was asked questions such as: “How does an Arab woman deal with representation?” or “What about sexuality in culture?”

It was a bit startling, because I first and foremost wanted my work to be recognised for its quality rather than what it represented. And yet, I would not define it as a negative experience, because I greatly benefitted from it – access to discussions which I probably would not have been invited to if I was not ticking these boxes. Who was I for the French audience? Just an illustrator, or a female Lebanese illustrator telling stories about the

Middle East, who speaks French? A simple way of putting it is to fight stereotypes all the time. When I participated in round tables, I would be introduced through my cultural background ("Arab woman producing comics about the Middle East and writing in Arabic"), whereas a French person doing exactly the same thing, would just be presented as a French comic artist who works with watercolour and ink. While there would immediately be a discussion about the work of the French artist, I had to go through 20 minutes of identity discussion before talking about my work.

Luckily, this has changed, probably because I have established my work as something independent and I also accepted that Lebanon transcends my work and my creative approach. While I wanted to fight this cultural influence and being put in boxes at the beginning, I realised that it is more harmful than deciding to be whatever I want it to be. When I left for Montreal, the relationship with my home country was very conflictual. I felt I could not be who I wanted to be in Lebanon, not be as free as I wanted and that I could not live from my drawings. Nowadays, I fully embrace Beirut as being part of my identity.

### 3. Where do you see the main challenges for Lebanon or France now and in the years to come?

Obviously, the answer for Lebanon would be a very, very long one. There are so many challenges, so big that we cannot even call them challenges

anymore. To sum it up in a dramatic way, the challenge would be to have a social uprising and an awakening of Lebanese citizens against the corrupt political class that has driven this country to the ground and destroyed it many times. We have reached the saturation point – if we do not keep those persons away from any position linked to power, there is a real danger that Lebanon will transition towards a collapse. There is an international theory called "*l'effondrement*" or "*collapsologie*" in French. It describes the collapse of society as we know it today, with its political, economic, ecologic and philosophic components. My recent comic "*Les Terrestres*" (The Earthly) with Noël Mamère touches upon this issue, based on interviews with people preparing themselves for the collapse of society. Having studied the subject theoretically, I feel that it very much applies to what is happening in Lebanon at the moment – a collapse of every single structure in the country. The big challenge is to reconstruct something long-term, sustainable, consistent and fair for the people.

Even before the revolution, there was a major garbage crisis, with demonstrations against the government. The ongoing environmental crisis in Beirut greatly affected the coast and the sea, up to a point where the water quality was rated as dangerous because of the pollution. This is very sad for the Lebanese who have a special relationship with the sea.

### 5. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together?

Following up on what I mentioned earlier, it would be solidarity and trying to diffuse the culture in a representative and authentic way.

### 6. Can you share a personal success story with us?

Calling it a success story would be pretentious, but it definitely had the largest impact of anything I have created so far. It is an initiative based on my drawings that I set up in 2020. It started with a plane ticket to Lebanon for the day after the Beirut blast in August 2020, which I obviously cancelled. I felt trapped in Europe and it was difficult to carry on, while my family and friends in Lebanon were mourning. I felt distraught, far away from home and powerless. Determined to do something, I decided to sell some of my prints online and donate the benefits to the "Impact Lebanon" fund-raising NGO. I did not think much about my initiative, apart from the fact that it would mostly help me to feel better.

While I expected to sell only the stock I had at that time, amounting to some €1 000 - 1 500, I was sold out in half an hour and collected twice the expected amount. Realising, after such unexpected success, that there was potential for a large-scale campaign, I transferred the campaign to a crowdfunding platform and closely collaborated with *Studio Fidèle*, a printing

studio in Paris. It turned out that we managed to raise over €92 000 in two weeks, which was far beyond my imagination. I would not have been able to do the same from Lebanon. For instance, you cannot use platforms like Paypal there. Me being in Europe made this campaign possible, so it was both a problem and a solution. The prints were not only bought by the Lebanese diaspora, but also by many Europeans according to the supporters' names. We received a lot of heart-warming messages of solidarity and testimonials of former visits to Beirut. So beyond the pure business, there was also some personal attachment and people were creating bonds through the Internet.

3.3.

## **Economic and environmental bonds**

### **Trade, energy and climate in the Mediterranean: Turning borders into positive bonds**

By

**Gonzalo Escribano,**

Senior Analyst and Director of the Energy and  
Climate Change Programme,  
Elcano Royal Institute

Since 1995, achieving the Euro-Mediterranean goal of shared prosperity has mainly focused on development cooperation, implementing trade liberalisation and fostering economic and institutional reforms to attract foreign investments. However, funding has not been sufficient, trade liberalisation has not been applied consistently, and reforms have proceeded too slowly and unevenly to significantly attract investments. Furthermore, over recent years, the Euro-Mediterranean policy space has been shrinking, becoming increasingly ineffective in inducing reforms. Trade incentives are almost exhausted, because liberalisation has mostly culminated in some neighbours (Morocco, Tunisia) and stopped in others (Algeria). Countries dependent on hydrocarbon exports had no incentive to reform, and where trade liberalisation has advanced more, there is a perception that its benefits are being captured by the elites and do not filter down to citizens. Euro-Mediterranean fatigue will not disappear simply by pushing through and intensifying some of the positive elements of existing policies; rather it will be necessary to develop a new Euro-Mediterranean project, attractive enough to anchor the expectations of the citizens of southern neighbours, and not only their elites. Three types of economic bonds could have a direct impact on both economic and human security in the region: 1) furthering trade integration through Euro-Mediterranean industrial networks, 2) developing joint energy transition pathways, and 3) deploying climate finance for both adaptation and mitigation strategies.

These economic bonds cannot be considered in isolation, nor as tools to cushion political divergences. In the first place, to be effective they require institutional reforms and to challenge existing political economy. Secondly, the script of economic interdependence as a substitute for democratic stability misses the fact that, to date, it has failed to trigger political reform in the region. Thirdly, the “cushion” narrative (the idea that economic interdependency cushions geopolitical differences) has proven

too narrow to manage the complexity of the interdependence patterns that articulate Euro-Mediterranean economic relations.

In the absence of good transport infrastructures, modern customs procedures and an attractive investment ecosystem, no significant nearshoring can be realistically expected. Developing renewable energies, not to mention exporting them to the EU, requires dedicated infrastructures, appealing investment regimes, clear regulatory frameworks and some kind of convergence in energy policies. The scaling up of climate finance needs a similar convergence of climate policies, as well as developing absorption capacities. Finally, all these three bonds are interlinked among themselves. It is difficult to foresee how renewable exchanges (be it electricity or hydrogen) could be promoted without implementing carbon pricing mechanisms, which can also become a requirement to develop industrial networks under an eventual EU border carbon adjustment as soon as 2023. In its initial steps, it will cover relevant sectors for Mediterranean neighbours, like the power sector, chemicals and fertilisers, taking into account the exporting country-specific power sector carbon intensity.

Regarding Euro-Mediterranean trade liberalisation, the priority should be abandoning low-grade free trade and opening up new opportunities of integrating into the European market. The participation of countries such as Morocco in European industrial networks demonstrates the potential for Euro-Mediterranean productive integration through intra-industry and intra-firm trade. Such a strengthening of productive integration calls for an urgent extension of free trade deals, starting with the incorporation of agriculture and services, including professional services, as well as the adoption of European trade (and now carbon pricing) standards to obtain full access to the EU’s internal market. Perhaps even this will not prove enough, because by now incentives such as the full inclusion of agriculture have been rendered obsolete by the meagre results of past trade liberalisation and the greater demands of



southern Mediterranean societies concerning market access or labour mobility. Regarding nearshoring opportunities, expectations should be managed carefully. Besides the already mentioned institutional constraints, it remains to be seen whether nearshoring would mainly benefit Mediterranean neighbours: firstly, it is difficult to abruptly alter existing value chains and gradual diversification only entails partial substitution; secondly, the European Green Deal logic of nearshoring is relocalising industrial activity within the EU, rather than redistributing it across neighbours, especially when considering the environmental criteria.

Another field with the potential for opening up new opportunities is that of energy, both conventional and renewable. Renewable energy cooperation, in particular, constitutes a key driver. Again, expectations have to be managed carefully to avoid past failures like DESERTEC or the Mediterranean Solar Plan. From a Green Deal perspective, prioritising the sustainability criteria implies that Mediterranean partners should achieve their own energy and climate policy targets before exporting their renewable (surplus) resources. From an economic and political approach, it is key to include the governance of such renewable exports. There are doubts

that future “electrostates” would behave like petrostates, but geopolitical risk will nonetheless be reduced if supplies come from stable democracies with good governance of their natural resources, unlike what happens with several key oil and gas suppliers. A case in point is the current hydrogen enthusiasm in the Mediterranean, with ambitious proposals reminiscent of those of DESERTEC to install 40 GW electrolyser capacity in North Africa and Ukraine by 2030, which tend to underscore the environmental, economic, governance and geopolitical barriers facing hydrogen development and exports in the Mediterranean. Regarding oil and gas, Mediterranean producers will continue to be key suppliers to the EU during the energy transition, but risk being economically and socially destabilised if hydrocarbon’s export income decreases and no alternative is offered.

This is why the EU should accompany its neighbours’ energy transition by offering appealing alternatives like climate finance. The Mediterranean is already being greatly affected by climate change, which is endangering livelihoods, critical infrastructures and economic sectors and, more importantly, threatening Euro-Mediterranean human and ecologic security. Few bonds may unite



**80% OF JOBS ARE CREATED  
BY SME'S IN THE  
EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Source: UfM, 2021.

more, but it is of fundamental importance that climate goals do not embark on divisive discourses. A more comprehensive and balanced Euro-Mediterranean energy script is essential to change the southern perception that Europe only wants to secure (if not appropriate) its energy resources in collusion with their elites (historically oil and gas, renewables in the future). And that Europe, the great historical polluter of the Mediterranean, intends to impose its renewable technologies and companies, transitioning to a green economy shielded by border carbon adjustments in which the Mediterranean neighbourhood risks being left behind and marginalised from a Euro-Mediterranean climate ambition and low-carbon space. Climate finance may ease the costs of the energy transition and de-risk investments. But perhaps more importantly, it can also redistribute the eventual income from a border Carbon Tax on the region's imports (whether goods or renewable exports) to countries converging towards carbon pricing and respecting Paris Treaty commitments. By reducing economic frictions and offering new incentives, borders can turn into bonds, this time in energy and climate.

**€20+ BILLION  
PER YEAR IN TOTAL  
INVESTMENT  
ON ENERGY  
NEEDED IN THE  
MENA REGION  
FOR THE NEXT  
30 YEARS**

Source: UfM, 2021.



# Testimonial by **Sana Afouaiz**

Founder and Director of the organisation “Womenpreneur Initiative”,

**Morocco / Belgium**



Founder of “Womenpreneur Initiative” and occasional driver of a *Volkswagen* (VW) van through native Morocco and in the MENA region, Sana Afouaiz promotes a more inclusive Euro-Mediterranean dialogue: “For us as civil society, it is very difficult to make ourselves heard when decisions are made. It is not sufficient to only consider the governmental position while there are different actors on various levels in each country who have their say on a matter.”

#### 1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?

It is a little conflictual: on the one hand, there is the sea, fish, good food, beautiful and diverse cultures and various languages. On the other hand, as a Moroccan living in Belgium, I see the controversies and paradoxes in relationships between North and South from both sides. For instance, the perception

that the South receives lessons from the North, while the North complains about the South. Europe should no longer look at the South as a socio-economic threat or as a region that should receive lessons on democracy or on human rights, but rather look at it as an equal partner.

#### 2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?

The strengths of our collaboration go back in history, encompassing important economic relations, cultural influence, political relationships and the geopolitical importance of the region. The Union for the Mediterranean provides a platform to share recommendations for the future of the region. There is still hope that the region will grow in the future and be stronger on the international scene. Concerning the

weaknesses, the most significant one is that we have not yet managed to establish a stable relationship that would take us further. There are various challenges, such as migration and the economic crisis, easily destabilising relations which are not yet sufficiently consolidated. This is something we must work on, because crises will always occur. This echoes an article by Yuval Harari during the pandemic: he invites world leaders to sit down and to rethink humanity and the way we treat each other, knowing that current choices will change our lives in the years to come.

### 3. What are the main challenges for Morocco and the region now and in the years to come?

For Morocco, a visible challenge by COVID-19 is the economic crisis. The country heavily depends on tourism, and is facing serious economic problems because of travel restrictions worldwide. Before the pandemic, the country was doing economically well and selling itself as a hub of economic development in Africa. Morocco tried to expand its relations with African partners by joining the African Union. The country started interesting projects on sustainable and economic development in different African countries, probably also because it failed to form adequate partnerships with European countries. At the same time, Morocco encountered growing social and economic inequalities amplified by the crisis, with an increasing level of poverty and

the gap between rich and poor continuing to grow. In particular, women suffer from a deterioration of the situation. Multiple cases of abuse as well as sexual and physical violence against women were reported during the crisis. These developments question the place of women in Moroccan society, in a country that advanced women's rights in the region.

Another development is the recent normalisation of relations between Morocco and Israel, with Morocco being the fourth Arab state to establish diplomatic relations. This was a strategic decision, but Morocco also wanted to re-establish relations with the approximately one million Moroccan Jews in Israel. There might also have been some hope that this strategic relationship with Israel could benefit the economic situation of Morocco.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

I believe that the EU's role is to establish bonds between countries, to ensure they are working together to overcome economic, social and political challenges. This would come in terms of investment, expertise, understanding the realities of different regions, looking at southern Mediterranean countries as core partners, listening to what partners around the table have to add and ensuring that the EU works with different actors, especially in the South. For us as civil society, it is very difficult to make ourselves heard when decisions are made. It is

not sufficient only to consider the governmental position, while there are different actors on various levels in each country who have their say on a matter. It is very important to have various representatives to obtain the full picture. This is the biggest role the EU needs to play – not only giving funds to the South and no one knows what those funds are used for, amplified by a lack of follow up, evaluation and control of the funds.

### 5. What are the challenges that the EU and Mediterranean countries can address together in the future?

Looking at the numbers, the challenges are visible. According to the EU, we had about 2.7 million migrants coming to Europe in 2019. The International Organization for Migration predicted that 1 out of 4 arrivals in the Mediterranean would be from North Africa. UNHCR said that 47 % of them would be women and youths. These are opportunities, also bearing in mind that many European countries have a high average age. We can work together on the integration of migrants, and not use them as tools for political campaigning to spark fear and division. Unlike in the past, we have increasingly diverse economies and a young and educated generation, especially in the South. The region offers one of the highest share of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) students, especially women, which is important for the future. The technological transformation in the region is an asset to



take advantage of, all the more in view of current global trends, such as digitisation, computing platforms, entrepreneurship and automation. These are elements we can build on, to shape relations in the region and to achieve more equality across levels and in the region – economically, politically and socially. Through my work, I see many opportunities in the Euro-Mediterranean region that we are currently missing out on. Hopefully, COVID-19 serves as a lesson to re-examine our relationship in this regard.

#### **6. Can you share a success story in the region with us?**

The first success story is the “Womenpreneur Tour” by “Womenpreneur Initiative” in 2019, where we travelled in a Volkswagen (VW) van from Morocco to Jordan. Hopefully, we will continue the tour in Algeria, Lebanon and Egypt in 2021. During the tour, we met many female tech entrepreneurs, in order to assess tech female entrepreneurship in the region. Looking at the South from a European perspective, there might be stereotypes about women in the region, for instance, about their role in society. It was therefore all the more interesting to discuss and to showcase the need to question these stereotypes. The region counts the highest number of female STEM students, while Europe is lagging behind. Our tour documentary shows that the challenges are complex, but there are also many opportunities. For instance, we met a Tunisian entrepreneur running a

start-up on artificial intelligence, now with 26 offices all over Africa after raising three million dollars in Tunisia. These are not yet visible, but important stories we need to leverage upon.

In 2020, we ran the “Generation W” programme and we will publish a paper on the impact of COVID-19 on female-led businesses in Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon. Women are literally hungry to be part of the tech field, which for a long time was labelled as masculine. Women need to be at the heart of the tech revolution and benefit from real investment, something practical for the future. For the future, we are planning a “Womenpreneur School” to bring women from the South and the North of the Mediterranean together to learn about innovative industries.

# Testimonial by **Kholoud Kahime**

President of the Moroccan NGO "CI2RC" (International Centre for Research and Capacity Building) and Professor for Health Security, Sustainable Development and Climate Change at the School of Technology Essaouira, Cadi Ayyad University Marrakesh (UCAM),

**Morocco**





For Kholoud Kahime, Moroccan Expert on climate change and President of the Moroccan NGO “CI2RC”, “[t]o give meaning to the Mediterranean is to confront a tangle of flows, networks, ideas, people, goods and money, which challenges the continued representation of the Mediterranean as existing somewhere between homogeneity and otherness.”

#### 1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?

In my view, four keywords represent the Mediterranean: Sea, Nature, History and Culture. It is a geographical space between three shores – European, the Middle East and North Africa – with common characteristics: ecologically, such as the Mediterranean climate marked by hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters, the Mediterranean biodiversity, and the type of soil. Culturally, with heterogeneous and yet similar cultures – music, cuisine, customs and traditions. In this sociocultural context, the Mediterranean focuses on two closely linked elements: universalism and cosmopolitanism.

History and different civilisations in the region play a central role in identifying the common origin of Mediterranean culture. To give meaning to the Mediterranean is to confront a tangle of flows, networks, ideas, people, goods and money, which challenges the continued representation of the Mediterranean as existing somewhere between homogeneity and otherness.

I personally discovered Mediterranean collaboration during my Master's and Doctorate, through scholarship and exchange programmes. For many young students and researchers, programmes like Erasmus+ and Erasmus Mundus have changed their lives and present opportuni-

ties for developing scientific and technical bonds.

#### 2. Where do you see the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?

For me, the strengths of Euro-Mediterranean relations are based on partnership and commitment. These strengths are particularly linked to the geographical proximity of countries, cultural diversity, countries' good will to collaborate and strengthen different types of collaboration through exchange programmes and financing development projects. Strengthening the Mediterranean policy

means the adoption of a modern and equitable political reform, based on mutual aid and tolerance for regional development. Further strengths include the presence of natural resources, such as natural gas, mines, biodiversity, fauna and flora, etc. All these elements make the region a laboratory of ideas for broader initiatives and enable it to become a global leader in the regionalisation process.

Among the weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations are recurring political tensions and unresolved regional conflicts. We also observe increasing social and economic disparities between northern and southern countries, maintaining the mentality of developed and underdeveloped countries, which is responsible for a feeling of inferiority by less developed countries. In addition, economic and financial exchanges remain very asymmetrical, and the current economic and industrial free trade system does not allow trade between the EU's partner countries. Not to mention demographics and social disparities, migration from Africa, as well as problems of resources, such as scarce water and energy.

### **3. Where do you see the main challenges for Morocco and the Euro-Mediterranean region now and in the years to come?**

The truth is that there are many common challenges, for instance, health-related, economic, social and ecological, including climate change, environmental degradation

and depletion of resources. Nevertheless, the current pandemic shows that what we most need in times of crisis is solidarity and cooperation. In my opinion, the most important challenge is political. As a result of conflicts among countries, Morocco might struggle to collaborate in the Mediterranean. If we manage to find common ground based on tolerance, peace and respect for particularities, we can achieve stability, security and establish any kind of partnership.

More effort should be made as well regarding the socioeconomic development of Mediterranean partner countries, which will help to establish migration as chosen and not as suffered.

### **4. Which of these challenges can the EU and Mediterranean countries address together and how?**

While much effort is already being made by the EU, it needs more leadership in resolving conflicts between countries to have the confidence of all parties. As mentioned, these problems currently block Euro-Mediterranean collaboration. On the political level, Europe must mediate on issues and tensions between countries in the region. Overall, we must give priority to the vision of economic and social policies, that puts economic growth, equity, regional development and territorial convergence on the same level. Economic policies must be assessed not only on their contribution to growth, but also on the number of jobs created,

their contribution to reduce poverty and their contribution to regional development. The EU's trade policy must not run counter to or contradict its development policy. Thus, trade agreements negotiated by the EU with its Mediterranean neighbours must pursue the objective of reducing the wealth gap between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Another challenge is environmental: the EU is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, after China and the United States. The region around the Mediterranean can expect more frequent extreme heat peaks and less rain. Joint efforts are essential and there is a whole social system under threat, since climate change affects all member states to varying degrees. To mitigate climate change, the EU set up the European Green Deal to make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. More efforts are needed in terms of adaptation to climate change, especially for Mediterranean countries, by encouraging circular economy, protecting biodiversity, encouraging green projects, digitisation of services, smart cities and more.

There are already lots of projects and partnerships in Morocco in this field, for instance, on reducing greenhouse gases, the *Plan Maroc Vert*, capacity building for NGOs to manage climate hazard, and partnerships and twinning programmes between cities. Nevertheless, we hardly see results of these initiatives. Leadership and visibility are lacking, to show the multiple connections around the Mediterranean

to citizens of both shores. Put simply, we need to vulgarise collaboration and communicate more about those initiatives and projects. As a positive side effect, it might contribute to change the sometimes negative, historically influenced images of citizens from both shores of the Mediterranean of each other.

Facing these various global challenges, this is not the time for conflict and capitalisation, but for human values based on mutual aid, sharing knowledge, trust, solidarity (regarding vaccines for example) and clarity. Financial support is not the only answer to all these challenges; we first of all need values as a basis for cooperation.

#### 5. Can you share a success story on Euro-Mediterranean relations with us?

The first example is as President of the Moroccan NGO "CI2RC" (*Centre International de Recherche et de Renforcement des Capacités / International Centre for Research and Capacity Building*), focusing on territorial development from Essaouira. We provide training and conduct projects on entrepreneurship, leadership, digitisation of services and smart cities, and also partner with Friedrich Naumann Foundation Morocco. Such initiatives can easily be transferred or scaled up to ensure a sustainable and equitable development. In the future, we seek to collaborate with a French NGO from La Rochelle, to study the impacts of climate change. There is already

a twinning between the cities of Essaouira and La Rochelle, two coastal cities, with commonalities in terms of climate, urbanisation and architecture.

On a personal level, exchange programmes and scholarships represent a life-changing opportunity for young people in the region. This was also my case, when I received a UN scholarship (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) provided by the Prince Albert of *Monaco Foundation*. It provided me with a grant to finish my PhD thesis, to conduct an internship at NASA and to win further awards for my research. Personally and professionally, this opportunity made a big difference to me.

3.4.

## **Migratory bonds**

# **A Euro-Mediterranean agenda on migration: How to do things differently**

By

**Francesco Pasetti,**

Research Fellow,

CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs

When it comes to migration in the Mediterranean, the prolonged humanitarian crisis leaves little room for optimism. More than 20 000 people lost their lives in this sea between 2014 and 2020. Some people could not leave the southern shore, such as those intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard (more than 3 000 in the first trimester of 2021, according to UNHCR) and jailed in inhumane centres, or were stopped in Turkey, where 3.6 million people are currently seeking international protection. Others managed to reach European shores. However, in many cases, their fate was like that of the former: some remained trapped in degrading camps, others were left to their own devices, as reported by international organisations in Greece and Spain.

These are “collateral effects” of the governance of migration established between Mediterranean shores, which was strengthened after the 2015 refugee crisis. In this model of governance, policies are designed and funded by host countries on the northern side, though they tend to be implemented in close collaboration with countries of the southern side. Such a model takes root in a European agenda increasingly concerned with border security, as testified by the growing expenditure on coast guards, surveillance technologies and remote outflows control. Brought to the ground of security and control, the European ideal of a “safe, ordered and regular migration” turns to its opposite: today human mobility across the Mediterranean is dangerous, messy and irregular.

It is high time to change the course and make room for a different Euro-Mediterranean agenda on migration. In the short run, the priority should be to ensure safe and legal pathways. Without them, increasing migration control means more dangerous mobility. For refugees and asylum seekers, we talk about Protected Entry Procedures (PEP), including resettlements and Humanitarian Visas. Resettlements refer to the transfer of refugees from the first country of asylum to another state that grants them

permanent residence. Despite their flawed and lagged application in the EU context, resettlement schemes have been demonstrated as being a feasible and effective solution in other contexts, especially for the most vulnerable refugees. Humanitarian Visas, to be requested at the consulates and embassies of member states, secure asylum seekers the right to entry into Europe before setting foot on the continent. These policy tools, apart from sparing migrants a perilous journey, would allow the saving of the millions of euros that, every year, go to border control and the fight against human trafficking. So far, however, these policies have been implemented either with great difficulty (resettlement) or only as extraordinary measures (Humanitarian Visa). The lack of both political willingness and solidarity within and among member states has prevented them from taking hold as mainstream policy solutions at EU level.

Safe and legal pathways represent an issue that goes beyond asylum and regard all the categories of human mobility. Given the significant labour-related circular flows between the Mediterranean shores, economic migration seems particularly worthy of attention for Euro-Mediterranean relations. Key priorities in this regard are a new visa system regulating work-related entries and the portability of social and economic rights. Providing balanced interests and institutional coherence between host countries and countries of origin, these measures not only encourage safer migratory flows, they would also help to maximise the positive effects of economic migration at origin (in the long run), while contributing to preventing exploitation at the destination (in the short run). Spain, for instance, has long guaranteed pension and social security entitlements to Latin American and Moroccan citizens through bilateral agreements with countries of origin, which has shown positive effects. The Spanish “successful case” is only one among several good practices that can be envisioned and implemented between countries of origin and destination. There is no reason to think that analo-

gous arrangements could not be scaled up to the Mediterranean region. In this regard, the ultimate goal and crucial challenge regard the possibility to go beyond bilateral agreements and move towards multilateral frames embracing the whole region.

In the long term, the goal cannot be other than reducing inequality. After all, routes of economic migrations have always emerged to join places at the opposite ends of a wealth gap. Data on income, education, wellbeing and development say much in this regard: the Mediterranean Sea keeps apart two distinct worlds in terms of rights and opportunities. The GDP per capita of Italy is four times that of Tunisia and Spain's is five times that of Morocco. The average salary on the northern coast of the Mediterranean is three times that earned on the opposite side.

The reduction of inequality between these worlds has long justified EU migration policies, framed with the mantra of "addressing the root causes of migration". Unfortunately, the policies adopted so far have proven to be ineffective. Development aid represents a paradigmatic example in this regard. Over the last decades, the EU and its member states have been reinforcing the subordination of development aid to the requirements of migration control. This has not only distorted the essence of development aid, but it has also generated negative effects in the countries of origin, for instance, by hindering economic dynamics among neighbour states. In this sense, the reduction of inequality also depends on breaking the link between development aid and migration control. At the same time, it calls for complementary solutions, such as measures that lower transaction costs of remittances. This said, the solution goes far beyond the area of migration and development: the reduction of inequality inevitably needs trade and foreign policies that, on the one hand, respect countries of origin's key resources and strategic sectors and, on the other, consider the benefits for large parts of society. Many of the people who reached the Canary Islands at the end of 2020 were former fishermen from Senegal, who had lost their jobs after the fisheries agreements signed by their government with the EU (renewed in November 2020).

A new agenda on migration should also include integration policies. Here, the priority is to ensure substantial equality between citizens and third-country nationals (TCNs). As regards formal access to basic rights in key domains of integration, formal equality seems to be achieved in most of the EU: to a large extent, indeed, the majority of EU member states *de jure* recognise TCNs' rights and opportunities similar to those granted to nationals. The problems become evident as we move toward practice. Problems and obstacles in the implementation phase hinder the integration process and often result in the *de facto* inability to exercise the rights and opportunities recognised



in law. This is the case of hard-to-obtain documentation limiting access to healthcare and education or, to mention another prominent example, the lack of resources limiting integration policies' scope and effectiveness. Fundamental rights related to healthcare, housing and employment, often are *de facto* precluded. The dramatic pictures of migrants sleeping in the street that have marked the recent chronicle of major European cities also have to be seen in the light of integration cutbacks.

However, the solution is not merely economic. It is also strategic and organisational. In order to have effective policies that are up

to the current challenges, first of all we need to recognise integration as a three-way process involving migrants, origin and host countries. Civil society organisations play a crucial intermediary and catalytic role. In the Euro-Mediterranean context, this means more and better collaboration across the Mediterranean shores; for example, through the alignment of integration measures in host countries with emigration and diaspora policies in countries of origin. Policy options and tools are already available to Euro-Mediterranean policymakers. To date, what has been lacking is the political willingness to convert them into substantial and effective policy solutions.

### Human Development Index (selected countries, 2018)

Source: UNDP.

COUNTRY	Israel	22	RANK
	Spain	25	
	France	26	
	Italy	29	
	Greece	32	
	Portugal	40	
	Turkey	59	
	Algeria	82	
	Tunisia	91	
	Lebanon	93	
	Jordan	102	
	Libya	110	
	Egypt	116	
	Morocco	121	
	Syria	154	



# Testimonial by **Waad Al-Kateab**

Awarded Documentary Filmmaker ("For Sama") and Activist,

**Syria / United Kingdom**



Award-winning Syrian filmmaker, Waad Al-Kateab (“For Sama”), having fled Syria through Turkey towards Europe, underlines the human bonds across the Mediterranean: “There is a human connection across borders and we all want to live in peace and have a better future for ourselves and the next generations.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

The Mediterranean is part of my personality, my cultural traditions and my understanding of the world. Syria is where I grew up and it is part of the Arab world for me. At the same time, I feel connected to all countries in the region, especially following the Arab Uprisings. It is something we share and feel we belong to. Syrians dream of a development such as in Tunisia. It gives us hope that there is at least one country which changed for the better after the revolution, although I know it is not easy either. I went to Tunisia last year, which was very emotional for me.

**2. Where do you see the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

I grew up with ideals and values, like democracy, freedom and human rights. In Syria, we conceive of them as Western or European values. Consequently, we expected that these societies would take responsibility, act and show solidarity with Syrians during the war. This was the case at the beginning of the refugee crisis, but with more people coming to Europe, we also observed a certain instrumentalisation of refugees for political agenda setting. Some countries and governments

used the Syrian conflict for their own benefit. Waking up from this fairy tale about democracy and freedom was disappointing for me. At the same time, meeting lots of people in many countries while promoting my film “For Sama”, named after my first daughter, was also a source of inspiration and hope. I felt it through people’s tears after screenings, asking what they could do for Syria. This gives me hope, also to show that we are not coming to Europe to take away opportunities from others, as some would have people believe. There is a human connection across borders and we all want to live in peace and have a better future for ourselves and the next generations.

When I started working on “For Sama”, I did not expect such a huge resonance. Another Syrian film, about refugees and war – I was told not have high expectations. When the film was released, I was shocked at how many people wanted to watch it. This is how the “Action for Sama” campaign was born. It was a new kind of challenge, requiring real and achievable goals, which seems difficult having in mind what happens in Syria every day. For instance, the day I received the BAFTA award in 2020 (category: “Best Documentary”), there were over 3.5 million civilians in Idlib being displaced and threatened to be killed. Transforming sympathy and awareness into action was both very difficult and a great human experience. We reached decision makers through screenings in the UK Parliament, the US Congress and at the United Nations, and organised bilateral meetings with politicians in Europe.

When people ask what they can do, we first tell them to spread the word about the film. It is an easy and accessible tool for understanding the situation in Syria. Secondly, our “Action for Sama” website provides tools to participate by sharing support on social media and by contacting elected representatives. Lastly, we build on donations and volunteering, also in Syria. Of course, there is no magic solution, and nothing will change radically, but small steps will lead to change.

### 3. To what extent was filming or the way you did it as a woman different?

At first, I did not think of it as a film. Filming everyday life in Syria was challenging in several ways: I was an inexperienced filmmaker, but it was precisely what gave me so much flexibility – having no plan where and what to film and working without limitations. As a woman, I was interested in and felt many things that were probably not relevant to men. While for me, there were so many details and experiences, even more as I went through it as a mother and reflected that through the camera. I could also build trust among women, because they saw me pregnant with Sama and naturally wanted to talk to me. Of course, there were also many difficulties as a woman, but it was really worth it. Because our voices as women in Syria and in the region were not things people usually hear, so it gives the film a different layer of understanding and honesty.

What makes my film very unique and different from others is also the fact that I, as a Syrian, was the Director, leading the whole process until its presentation to the public. This is my story and what I experienced. Unfortunately, my situation in itself is not unique.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

We want to change something in Syria and we feel Europe has a stake with us in this – in Syria, Tunisia or any country where we can work together

towards improving life for citizens. COVID-19 makes it very clear: when one country is concerned, it affects almost the whole world. The EU also has an interest in collaborating with Syria regarding refugees. I am one myself, having fled Aleppo in 2016 through Turkey to reach the UK. It is important to have refugees speak for themselves and to participate. You need to gather people around one table and bring refugees to talk about their own issues and problems. You do not set a system or broker for them from your perspective; finding solutions should be from their perspective. You go to their table, not bring them to yours. I am highlighting the participatory approach here. It should work through understanding, honesty, trust and sharing the same values and beliefs.

It is also important for me to comment on the terminology of Syria being in a “civil war”, which I firmly reject. Not mentioning it as a revolution – but instead talking about it as a civil war with Syrians killing each other and fighting the ruling class and its people – is a campaign by Russia and the Assad regime. I do not question what happened and still happens in Syria, but about what you call it. We always try to highlight this: you can call it conflict, war or struggle, but it is not a civil war for me.

### 5. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can address together in the future?

There are currently negotiations with countries about return-

ing Syrian refugees. Some claim the situation in Syria is now stable and that the ruling system is accepted by the population, some even mention elections. All this will never happen if Assad is still ruling the country and this should be made very clear. We did not flee Syria because of the war, but because of the Assad regime. Any discussion on the country's future should include Assad being out of Syria and facing trial by an international court. These and many more questions should be addressed, before we even talk about returning to Syria. The EU has a major influence on this.

#### **6. Can you share a success story with us?**

"For Sama" itself – I never expected to have such an influence and impact. Not just regarding the awards and the spread of information on the war, but also the impact on Syrians themselves. What I am most proud of is that Syrians identify with "For Sama" and that they feel it is their story. I receive messages from Syrians, who are still under control of the regime, saying they will continue the fight for freedom. Another success for me was the awards ceremony and the fact that we were able to talk about Free Syria at very significant events, such as the BAFTA and Oscar ceremonies. Also, the statement I made with my dress at the Oscars, showing Arabic words translated as: "We dare to dream, we do not regret asking for dignity." We might have lost so many things on the ground, but we own this narrative.

# Testimonial by **Schams El Ghoneimi**

Co-Founder of “Syrians Got Talent”  
and Political Advisor in the European Parliament,

**France – Egypt / Belgium**



“We need to fight exclusion with inclusion”, shares Schams El Ghoneimi, Political Advisor and Co-Founder of “Syrians Got Talent”, a band of Syrian musicians who fled to Europe. “We need to prevent our divided societies from further divisions through a genuine Euro-Mediterranean exchange, far from institutional debates.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

My relationship with the Mediterranean is very intimate – my mother comes from France, my father from Egypt. I am, so to say, the result of Mediterranean relations. Our bonds are beautiful, rich and old. I was always proud of telling friends at school I was French-Arab or French-Egyptian. I became more French through education, but I wanted to further discover my father’s culture. So I learned Arabic as an adult and worked on Syria for an NGO in Cairo. In 2011, I could freely vote in Egypt for the first time and my dual citizenship became real, which

also fostered my identity as a French Egyptian or as a European Arab.

**2. Where do you see the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

Nowadays, we have mostly functioning political institutions in Europe. European democracy is also a public space with free media, where we can freely access information and express ourselves. We Europeans are empowered to share and debate different views to solve problems. While we might disagree with Viktor Orbán in Hungary, we

also have allies such as politicians, foundations, NGOs and journalists there.

In the southern Mediterranean, this is often not the case. When the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly convenes, you might expect that relevant topics are freely discussed – for instance climate change, rule of law and gender equality. However, most of the southern Mediterranean countries are semi-authoritarian or authoritarian regimes and do not allow for such a public space. This also transpires in the depth of EU partnerships. On one side, there is the EU concluding association agreements, backed by the European Parliament as well



as national parliaments, civil society and media. On the other side, there are mostly southern Mediterranean governments without any accountability or transparency, a so-called parliament and maybe a few NGOs and journalists. There is a huge contrast between the hundreds of millions of citizens on the southern flank and the fact that we barely hear about how they think.

### 3. What are the main challenges for France and Egypt now and in the future?

Nowadays, the global menace of populism erodes democracy from within. It brought the current authoritarian regime in Egypt into power: people were dissatisfied and protested mostly peacefully against the then elected government, but they were also fine with the prospect of breaking a constitution that had been approved by referendum, restoring military rule and a wish for new elections. This belief in improvement, while disregarding the rule of law, partly originates from the fact that citizens were not used to democratic systems. In France, I experienced the underlying populist menace with the “Yellow Vests” movement. Whether you live in the French Ardèche or in a poor neighbourhood of Cairo, you often do not feel you belong or feel represented. I observed similar tendencies in Germany while volunteering for six months in Hitzacker last year. We need to restore trust, whether in Europe or in the more difficult environment in the South.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the southern Mediterranean?

The EU has a moral obligation to poke its nose into what dictators call “internal meddling in domestic affairs”. These are not only domestic affairs, but relate to our universal values. When someone is unjustly detained – or worse – for supporting values that are fundamentally ours too, we should stand by this person. It is obviously sensitive: Europeans can never be heard without the weight of colonial history and the wrongdoings that our grandparents naively or deliberately encouraged throughout the decades. Europeans are not solely seen through the lens of democracy, but also through our own historical mistakes. However, we should not be tricked into some regimes’ propaganda: upholding universal values, often in the name of a repressed civil society, is not neo-colonialism.

### 5. What are the challenges European and Mediterranean countries can address together in the future?

Climate change is a top priority for the EU, with direct effects on both sides of the Mediterranean. However, progress takes time and there are hardly transparency or reliable statistics in the southern Mediterranean. For instance, beaches in Egypt, Libya and Algeria are mostly military property, so Europe has to deal with the military for a policy on environmental and maritime affairs. This is

challenging, once you stumble upon state corruption instead of saving biodiversity. We also need to invest in democracy – in Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Israel-Palestine and wherever we can – knowing that it will have a long-term added value if Tunisia stands as a stable and democratic Arab model.

### 6. Can you share a success story related to Euro-Mediterranean relations?

Let us take “Syrians Got Talent”, a band of Syrian musicians who were mostly new refugees in Belgium in 2016. They have played 21 debate-concerts in Europe since, sending a strong message for solidarity and social inclusion. As a co-founder, my aim was to act and respond to the growing hate towards refugees.

We combine concerts with debates, to allow for a deeper interaction with guests. The idea was born after the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015. I organised a private concert with newly arrived Syrian refugees at my home, against the backdrop of a worsening public discourse on migration. Just after the Brussels terrorist attacks in 2016, I co-organised a bigger concert in Brussels with 150 guests. This first concert and my Facebook profile were denounced by Steve Bannon’s Breitbart News. I was accused of giving free tickets to new refugees only, not Europeans who had to pay, and promoting Oriental rather than Western music. But this was only the beginning of many more concerts.



We did not expect such strong support from local Belgian communities in addition to refugee host families. The professional Syrian musicians were happy to give back to those who had helped them find a new home, above all through the universal language of music. One cannot imagine how proud they were to play their music, interact with the audience and to be given a voice in the local media. During the debates, we humanised what some media and politicians reduced to “Syrian refugees”. The concerts intended to provide self-identification and lots of positive energy. In particular, at a moment when media were solely focused on European terrorist attacks and some European suspects who might have passed by Syria – criminals who Syrians fleeing Assad’s repression or the so-called “Islamic State” (IS) were unjustly assimilated into. We wanted to make these Syrians understand that they could bring many good things to Europe and that they needed to act, otherwise people would not change their minds.

We need to fight exclusion with inclusion and prevent our divided societies from further divisions through a genuine Euro-Mediterranean exchange, far from institutional debates. Many of the bonds created remain strong to this day. Once the situation allows for it, we will organise concerts again.

3.5.

## **Security bonds**

# **A cooperative approach to security and defence in the Mediterranean**

By

**Félix Arteaga,**

Senior Analyst, Elcano Royal Institute

The Mediterranean region has not lacked ambitious initiatives to address its security and defence problems. The old “Southern Flank” of the Cold War gave path to several cooperation initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) to promote a zone of peace, stability and security in 1995. There was also the failed attempt to set up the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability to prevent tensions and crises by means of security cooperation in 1999. Such initiatives shared a comprehensive approach towards security, the same as that which had allowed the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe to bridge the gap between eastern and western Europe in the previous decades. Security was only one among different goals (baskets) for cooperation, though it had a prominent role in Euro-Mediterranean relations due to the potential impact of armed conflicts on the regional stability.

Twenty-five years later, the security outcome is lower than expected. An armed conflict remains active in Syria, another one seems to be coming to an end in Libya, while military actions continue in the Sinai Peninsula and Iraq, and frozen conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian, the Greek-Turkish and the Moroccan-Sahrawi melt from time to time. Current cooperative frameworks in place, such as the 5+5 Initiative of Defence or NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative have increased military collaboration, but they have neither settled any of the lingering conflicts nor widened their scope to the non-military challenges of security, such as migration, cyber and organised crime, environmental emergencies or pandemics, among others.

Such sparse results are not only due to the internal limitations of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process, but also to the emergence of new drivers that are changing the strategic context as well. Firstly, the settlement of conflicts is now more complicated than before, due to the presence of new actors with their own agendas of strategic

competition. Russia, China, Turkey and some Gulf States fill the growing strategic vacuum and occupy positions of political, economic and military influence. As the Libyan case shows, any future cooperation scheme will have to deal with this burden of regional and sub-regional geopolitics.

Secondly, the old paradigm of direct military involvement of foreign forces under the UN, NATO or EU flags in regional conflicts is changing, due to the doubts about their effectiveness after the negative experiences of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, among others. Nowadays, military interventions are conducted by proxies, mercenaries, drones and special operations forces, because military powers are reluctant to put boots on the ground, with the only exception of counter-jihadist terrorism, as in the cases of the US and the Global Coalition Against International Terrorism in Iraq and Syria or France in the Sahel, in addition to the defence of national strategic interests, such as those of Turkey and Russia in Syria.

Under this new pattern, military cooperation is now focused on capacity building and, accordingly, international security assistance tends to complement, but not to replace local security organisations in the management of conflicts in a “supporting” versus “leading” role. In this regard, the EU has developed new mechanisms, such as the European Peace Facility to facilitate the military assistance of EU countries to local actors in order to increase the ownership and resilience of regional and subregional organisations.

Thirdly, armed conflicts are no longer the main sources of regional insecurity. The whole region is facing a combination of structural sources of insecurity, such as the digital divide, technological disruption and environmental sustainability, to mention just a few that surpass the capacity of military instruments. These new “glocal” or domestic concerns increase the feeling of insecurity, not only at the governmental level, but also at societal and individual levels. The ongoing

geopolitical confrontation among global and regional powers does not necessarily lead to armed confrontations, but the weaponisation of the commercial, technological, and diplomatic instruments aggravate the existing political and social fault lines.



The variety and number of intrastate and intrasocietal sources of insecurity are increasing, due to an accumulation of grievances and inequalities, which put at risk the political and social stability of countries. Whoever may be the most guilty, be they the governments unable to deliver good governance, democracy and rule of law, or the disruptive impact of globalisation on the economy, the environment and welfare of societies and individuals, tensions mount from bottom up and the solutions are beyond the reach of traditional military instruments. As a result of this viral – and virtual – accumulation of insecurity and uncertainty, the setting of the security priorities in the Mediterranean agenda is more complicated than ever.

Any new initiative to improve Euro-Mediterranean security should consider both the reasons why past approaches to cooperation have failed, as well as the new dynamics of security. To start with, the development of a Euro-Mediterranean security community in the region should be rooted in and eased by a pre-existing “Mediterranean identity” that does not yet exist as such. In order to develop such a feeling of identity, the security community must deliver common responses to shared security perceptions, the same kind of bonds that helped the EU to construct its own security identity. As the Euro-Mediterranean record shows, military threats have not been able to frame such an identity, thus future initiatives should pay more attention to developing closer bonds for the security and welfare of populations. Beyond the theological debate between interests and values, the construction of the Euro-Mediterranean security community should put the security of populations before the security of systems. To give an example, any joint military action to provide health assistance when facing a pandemic – or emergency aid in natural disasters – would deliver a greater sense of security and identity, and stronger bonds to the Euro-Mediterranean region than any other military instrument of cooperation.

Finally, and in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of previous approaches, the construction must progress through pragmatic bonds instead of idealistic ones. Against the temptation of constructing overarching top-down structures, security arrangements should be constructed bottom up to include those willing and able to cooperate. As long as resources are limited and the security context is too fluid, instead of elaborating too ambitious and long-term agendas, joint initiatives should boost those security agendas able to add value in the short term. Last but not less important, security bonds must deliver tangible goods to the populations of the Mediterranean, so that they feel more secure together than alone.





# Testimonial by **Koert Debeuf**

Editor-in-Chief of EUobserver  
and Expert for the Middle East,

**Belgium**



Koert Debeuf, Middle East Expert and former Advisor to Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, would like to see the EU more involved: “When the ‘big boys’ fight, the EU can only step back. It is also partly because of the lack of initiative and real political will immediately after the Arab Uprisings that Europe has missed an opportunity to forge new connections and new bonds around the Mediterranean.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

Despite being Belgian, I somehow feel more Mediterranean. It has always fascinated me, I learned Ancient Greek and Latin and first crossed the Mediterranean for Lebanon and Syria in 2009. Historically, the Mediterranean is one and the same to me, but with two different sides. I find it the most interesting part of the world and I feel very happy on both sides of the sea.

**2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

Looking back since the start of the Barcelona Process, weaknesses outweigh strengths. Firstly, colonialism interferes historically and complicates EU-Arab relations in many ways. Be it for security, defence or other areas, the EU sees the other side of the Mediterranean mainly as a market and not as a partner. In extraordinary moments, both may become partners, such as during the Iraq and the Gulf

Wars. Apart from that, it unfortunately remains an unequal and uneasy relationship with little evolution. Secondly, the perception of danger is not the same in Europe and the Arab world. Many countries would point out Iran as a major security threat, an assessment which is not necessarily shared by Europe. Thirdly, there are countries such as Turkey, Morocco and Tunisia which sometimes feel closer to Europe than to other parts of the MENA region, but their EU membership is unfortunately not an option for the EU.



One of the major global threats is what I call “tribalisation” in my book (“Tribalization: Why war is coming”, 2019) – going back to the tribe we know best. Tribal fundamentalist groups, from a religious or nationalist point, will continue to undermine stability, democracy and other core values of society. There could be lots of cooperation on content and not only on exchanging spyware between European and Arab countries. ISIS is a good example: Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Germany and France – very different strategies for dealing with it. We missed an opportunity to learn from each other, but it is not lost yet. With some openness, we could work together on what I see as the major challenge of our future: radicalisation of all sorts, extreme right in Europe and jihadism in the Middle East, which for me are two sides of the same coin.

### 3. Seen from Belgium, which are the main challenges the region is facing now and in the years to come?

Belgium has little self-interest in the Mediterranean, apart from migration, prevention of terrorism and the economy. Generally, there is not much for Belgium to do, with some exceptions. For example, after the Brussels terrorist attacks in 2016, where important information about terrorist cases was provided by Turkish and Moroccan secret services. Concerning the economy, it sounds strange, but Belgium is a small country with not such a small economy. For instance, a Belgian company dug out parts of the new Suez

Canal in Egypt, and the Egyptian “Stella” beer has headquarters in Brussels and Alexandria. There are many interesting historical connections. However, they remain limited, compared to countries like Italy, Spain, France and Greece.

There is another aspect to take into account: the local communities of Moroccan, Turkish, Algerian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Syrian citizens living in Belgium and who have a strong connection back to their countries. For instance, the situation in Belgium might heat up if something happens in Turkey, as seen around the *coup d'état* attempt in 2016. This connection, affecting probably less than 10 per cent of the population, is obviously politically and economically underestimated.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

During the first years after the Arab Uprisings in 2011, the EU had hope. But as this hope was not supported by money, nothing changed financially or institutionally. After the *coups* in several countries and the lost hope for democracy, Europe returned to its old *modus operandi*, which is that consensus is possible if there is economic gain. Politically, the EU is still not interested in the Middle East and current efforts focus on stopping migration and terrorism. Of course, these are EU priorities and some EU member states are more involved. For Italy and France, for instance, economic and energy interests are critical and their competition

has contributed to fuelling the war in Libya. The EU is unable to act, because it is France against Italy, or put more simply: when the “big boys” fight, the EU can only step back. It is also partly because of the lack of initiative and real political will immediately after the Arab Uprisings that Europe has missed an opportunity to forge new connections and new bonds around the Mediterranean.

Another area where better collaboration is absolutely needed are the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya. It is important that we work together on solutions, as much as possible and in an equal way. Currently, this is not happening, as various European countries side with different Middle Eastern countries. We currently see a kind of almost Mediterranean civil war happening in countries of the eastern Mediterranean. Cooperation exists bilaterally, but not multilaterally.

### 5. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together?

Culture and Education are perhaps the biggest fields for opportunities. There is much lack of knowledge and interest, or the former leading to the latter. People usually underestimate how different the Arab world is in its core, and therefore all the more interesting. We also tend to forget that we have historically much in common. We have forgotten all the interconnections that existed between the East and the West for three

millennia. These important inter-connections pushed both sides of the Mediterranean forward every time. I am convinced that, by reviving those connections, it can happen again.

For instance, the Renaissance and the spread of Sciences and Philosophy in Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was based on translations of Arabic works in Spain, mainly in Toledo. The impact of this connection between Europe and the Arab world that lasted for three centuries is still underestimated and little known both in Europe and the Arab world. By sharing thoughts and ideas on living together within the Ottoman Empire, the Balkans and in France, we can learn much from history and from each other, for example, how to deal with minorities and multiculturalism. We need to get rid of the stereotypes of the “tolerant West” and the “intolerant East”, of the “democratic West” as opposed to the “despotic East”. We need to showcase the important moments in history which have fertilised both sides.

**6. Do you have a success story on Euro-Mediterranean relations to share with us?**

This is an anecdote: I was the first European official entering Libya and Syria during the war. Going to northern Syria and the rebel area, I realised that the UN humanitarian aid, which was also EU aid, did not arrive there because everything had to go through Damascus. All aid going to the opponents was obviously stopped by the Assad regime.

I discussed and wrote about this, among others, to former EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva. She decided to provide humanitarian aid to the North. It was a very emotional situation and what I saw was absolutely dramatic.

This example shows that, because the EU bypassed legal and political obstacles, it was able to help tens of thousands of people, and probably even saved lives. This concrete example might teach us that, in order to move forward in relationships, we sometimes need to become more personal and less institutional.

# Testimonial by **Akram Kharief**

Journalist and Founder of the “Menadefense.net” blog,

**Algeria**



Akram Kharief, an Algiers-based independent Journalist and Founder of the “Menadefensa.net” blog, believes in the EU to lubricate relationships between countries: “I see the Mediterranean basin as something fluid. One needs circular policies to address it, however most are currently blocked.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

To me, the Mediterranean Sea is not a divide or a buffer between countries, but a place where we can gather. And if there is such a divide, it runs more from East to West rather than from North to South. For instance, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco have many similarities and intrapersonal connections with Spain, Italy and France. As an anecdote, the PIN code of my mobile was “1538” for years – the coordinates of the Strait of Messina (38°14'45"N; 15°37'57"E), believed to be the centre of the Mediterranean.

**2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

The main weakness in the southern Mediterranean stems from a lack of cooperation between countries. There are many political issues among countries, for instance, between Algeria and Morocco. Insufficient trust makes countries look for allies and partners elsewhere and develop their own strategies, which is a big endeavour for each country.

I see the Mediterranean basin as something fluid. One needs circular policies to address it, however most are currently blocked. Take the example of the Algerian-Moroccan border, closed for more than 25 years.

Metaphorically speaking, we feel that the electric power does not circulate amongst southern Mediterranean countries. This does not apply to the northern part of the Mediterranean which are EU members, because the EU helps to lubricate relationships between countries, opens borders and allows people to circulate freely. For me, the main challenge is to make politics and international relationships more fluid and less selfish.

Speaking of the strengths, the threshold to be overcome is not that high. Cultures are similar and, if disputes are resolved, collaboration can develop very quickly – people are ready on both shores of the Mediterranean. Citizens in the region have many positive expectations,

and regimes in the southern Mediterranean cannot stop this dynamic, but only delay the process. I still have hope for change, especially in Algeria. We are very pragmatic and believe that there is no failure at popular attempts for democracy and freedom, only a repetition. Considering what happened ten years ago and in 2019 as lessons to be learned, there is an evolution. In 2019, we observed a good way of addressing the regime. People did not resort to violence, which might have led to a degradation of the situation. Citizens, as well as the regime, have to undergo a learning curve. Hopefully, they will understand that there is a need for compromise.

### 3. What are the main challenges for Algeria now and in the years to come?

The biggest challenge for the Algerian regime is to manage the social and political demands for change. The second challenge is economics, where the regime wasted time in trying to find solutions on how to change its economic model. The mentality of the regime is a challenge, but the demand for change is unstoppable.

The third challenge is related to security, mainly insecurity. Algeria currently has an open front at almost all its borders – in the Sahara, in Libya, with Tunisia against AQMI and also in Mali and Niger. The Algerian Army and the security apparatus were not designed to cover such a big country with more than 6 000 km of borders. Until 2010-

2011, the Army covered only the northern part of the country. After the Arab Uprisings and issues in Libya and the Sahel, the Algerian Army discovered the difference between map and territory and the need to operate with the same means. The Army invests a lot in border securitisation and Algeria has managed to secure the area so far. But for how long? When speaking about tensions at the borders or in border regions, we have to keep in mind that this includes terrorism, criminality, rebellion, drug trafficking, illegal gold mining and migration.

### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

One of the EU's weaknesses is that it has too many member countries and a lot of bureaucracy. Some Arab regimes are keen to depict the EU as an evil power, organising plots in the region and financing organisations. The EU is purposefully used as a scarecrow image by Arab regimes, and yet there is a demand for more money and partnerships. For me, this is one of the main reasons for the minimal cooperation in European programmes, and we also see that cooperation varies, depending on the country and the policy area.

### 5. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together?

We firstly need to change the "teacher-pupil" attitude between North and South, if we

want to have an honest relationship. Unfortunately, I do not see it happening, nor did I see or feel it from an Algerian perspective. The main challenge in cooperation is not to be too intrusive and still to have reforms and transformation. Challenges we can face together related to North African countries are, for instance, the protection of human rights and freedom of speech. The EU should play a role in lubricating the relationships between countries of the southern flank, to have them collaborate and change their attitudes. If the EU helps to foster a North African or Maghrebi community, we could reach common opinions and common visions between the two sides of the Mediterranean, which would really benefit our relations.

### 6. Can you share a success story in the region with us?

Programmes in the cultural field and on a common Mediterranean heritage usually work well. However, in the early 2000s and for almost one decade, the EU tried to work on economic and administrative reforms, as well as on governance in Algeria, which was far less successful.

Generally speaking, Algerians and the Algerian Army are very proud of their independence and sovereignty. With the issue of illegal migration in the Mediterranean, the Algerian Navy has become more open, notably towards the international community and especially the EU. There is instant communication

with Italy, France and Spain for search and rescue missions and the Algerian Navy naturally integrated the Mediterranean naval community. They helped to save hundreds of non-Algerians – Europeans at sea and migrants. This very specific field of collaboration is a token of openness by Algerian actors, which could have a trigger effect. It might be a sad example, but I see it as a very positive and important sign and it underlines that we belong to something common.

3.6.

## Urban bonds

**How can cooperation  
*between and through*  
cities revive Euro-  
Mediterranean relations?**

By

**Hannah Abdullah,**

Senior Research Fellow, Global Cities Programme,  
CIDOB – Barcelona Centre for International Affairs



Euro-Mediterranean relations have been in gridlock for the past two decades, stalling under multiple pressures, from diverging national interests to geopolitical tensions and growing populism. With the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, these pressures have intensified and many national governments have turned inwards, overwhelmed by the challenges they face at home. But the health emergency has also shown how cities in the region have not only resisted the impulse to withdraw from collaboration, but have actively sought transnational exchanges as part of their crisis management. Over the past year, cities in the northern and southern Mediterranean – like their counterparts across the world – have collaborated intensely to share experiences and solutions on how to tackle the pandemic and its mid- to long-term socioeconomic impacts. The speed and success with which these local government alliances were rolled out was made possible by well-established city networks and other decentralised cooperation mechanisms, many of which date back to the early 1990s.

Compared with the faltering Euro-Mediterranean intergovernmental process, cooperation at city level has been thriving. Regional networks like MedCities have progressively grown and some of the most important global city networks, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Cities Alliance, have created region-specific programmes. The European Union and Union for the Mediterranean have also stepped up support and capacities for sustainable urban development projects in the Southern Neighbourhood. Further, both bodies have sought to strengthen multilevel governance mechanisms to better engage local authorities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. For example, in 2010 the European Committee of the Regions launched the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM); and in 2017 the UfM adopted its first Urban Agenda to establish a more integrated approach to policies concerning sustainable urban development in Mediterranean countries and to give local governments a greater

role in policy design and implementation. Similarly, national development agencies like Germany's GIZ and international organisations, such as the World Bank's Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), have made collaboration with and between local governments a key pillar of their work in the region.

When exploring this "urban turn" in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, it is important to stress that it is part of a global boom in city networking. It is also part of the broader recognition in global public policy debates that urbanisation will fundamentally shape our future, and that cities are not only problem hotspots, but equally drivers of positive transformation. Yet, given this more general trend towards adopting an urban lens to solving the big challenges of our time, it is surprising that most of the Euro-Mediterranean alliances that are created between and through cities still happen in parallel to conversations at intergovernmental level. Local government collaboration and urban development issues are all too often treated as thematic subsections of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

In part, this is due to the intergovernmental setup of the UfM and related cooperation frameworks, which impede effective multi-level processes and horizontal decision making. Unfortunately, platforms like ARLEM and the UfM Urban Agenda have so far changed little in this regard. The problem with these structural constraints is that the silo-based thinking and top-down governance they foster often do not provide adequate solutions to the risks of our urban age. With estimates suggesting that 80 % of the Mediterranean population will live in urban areas by 2030, and with the South having one of the fastest urbanisation rates worldwide, the impacts of regional urbanisation dynamics are not limited to technical urban planning issues, but cut transversally across all dimensions of Mediterranean collaboration – from political to economic and sociocultural relations.

Moving forward, there is great potential in recognising that city-level cooperation can

act as a transversal approach to rethinking and reviving Mediterranean bonds in a bottom-up and citizen-centred manner. Three opportunities stand out here.

Firstly, the positive results of city-to-city relations can potentially serve as an antidote to the frustration and disillusionment with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. Cooperation efforts at national level are often marked by North-South hierarchies and tend to take the form of slow political processes that are regularly obstructed by geopolitical factors and far removed from civil society. By contrast, at city scale, it is generally easier to create a more equal relationship between partners and to produce more immediate outcomes that engage civil society and can be felt in people's everyday lives. Despite their differences in urban morphology, population growth and economic and technical capacities, cities in the North and South share many challenges and both can benefit from knowledge transfer and joint capacity building.

In this "soft" cooperation between cities lies a second opportunity: the sharing of local experiences and technical knowhow for the transition to sustainable development – one of the core goals of Euro-Mediterranean relations. The UN 2030 Agenda (in particular SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities) and the New Urban Agenda both stress the importance of local government action for achieving the desired paradigm shift. In the Euro-Mediterranean region, there are countless local cooperation projects that testify to the capacity of cities to foster the various pillars of sustainable development. Examples include the GIZ project CoMun for participatory local governance in Maghreb countries; the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme, which supports cities in managing cultural diversity positively; MedCities' InCircle project, which applies circular economy principles to the tourism sector; the EU-funded CES-MED Cleaner Energy Saving Mediterranean Cities project, which assisted local authorities in formulating Sustainable Energy Action Plans (SEAPs); and

CMI's work on cities and climate change to support – among other objectives – coastal cities in developing public policy relating to climate adaptation and disaster risk management.

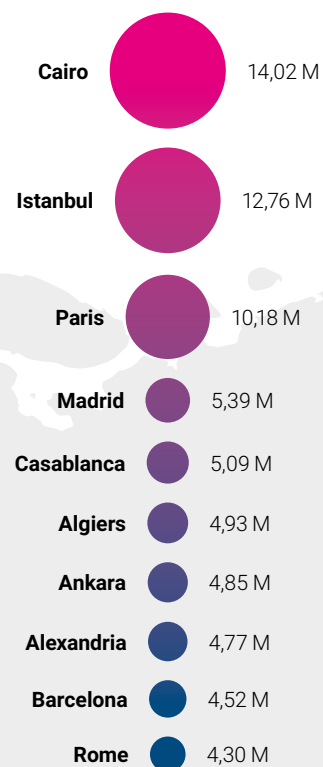
Thirdly, and following on from the last two examples, city-level cooperation provides a promising entry point for tackling the Mediterranean climate emergency. With the Mediterranean basin warming up faster than the rest of the planet, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership urgently needs to add a fourth "basket" to its activities. Peace and stability in the Mediterranean no longer just depend on strong political, economic and sociocultural ties, but increasingly also on environmental collaboration. The active engagement of cities will be vital for effective regional climate action, reversing the degradation of ecosystems and fostering biodiversity protection. Cities are not only responsible for a large part of the region's greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption, but they are also hardest hit by the adverse effects of climate change, such as extreme heat, rising sea levels and landslides. In response to these risks, many cities in the region are driving adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as innovation and social engagement for the green transition. Cities in the North certainly have more muscle power to push for a local green transition. However, those in the southern Mediterranean are also increasingly seeking international assistance to embark on their own transition pathways.

The EU's Green Deal is a unique opportunity to unlock the climate ambitions of cities in the southern Mediterranean. However, this will require giving cities and their networks a more central and formal role in the EU's climate and energy diplomacy. Indirectly, the EU has already been moving in this direction by opening up some of its urban climate programmes – such as the Covenant of Mayors, CIVITAS and, more recently, the 100 Climate Neutral Cities initiative – to cities in neighbouring countries. To be fully effective, these efforts need to be

expanded and integrated in the EU's strategy for the external dimension of the Green Deal. As one of the regions most affected by climate change, and with strong bonds between cities from both shores to build on, the Southern Neighbourhood would be an ideal experimentation ground for such multilevel climate diplomacy.

**10 largest cities and urban areas in the Euro-Mediterranean region in 2020 (population estimates, in million)**

Source: [www.citymayors.com](http://www.citymayors.com)



**7%**

**OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS  
LIVING IN URBAN AREAS IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN**

Source: UfM, 2021.

# Testimonial by **Gal Mor**

Director and Co-Founder  
of Abraham Hostels and Tours,

**Israel**



Gal Mor, a world traveller from Jerusalem and Co-Founder of Abraham Hostels & Tours, believes that cultural tourism allows people to “return inspired and with more awareness and understanding of the political realities than what is vehiculated in the media”.

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

For Israel, being located in the Middle East at the crossroads with the Mediterranean, everything depends on the perspective. The Mediterranean Sea is definitely a shared value, also ecologically, which provides a lot of the benefits we explore through tourism. However, we also need to look after this shared resource – for instance, the water quality, fish and other wildlife, sustainable management of travel and trading routes. This also touches upon other aspects like cross-cultural exchange, tourism and commerce.

**2. Where do you see the strengths and the weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

The Mediterranean Sea is something which bears multiple challenges and opportunities. Nowadays, we mostly look at it through the lens of migration from the southern to the northern shore. Here, the policy angle needs to change completely and we have to look at how to level up the living standards as much as possible. So that the incentive to travel is not one where somebody flees from persecution or hunger, but a voluntary choice to cross an open border and to come across in either direction, Europe or North Africa. With Europe facing economic challenges and a decreasing workforce because of demographics, there are lots of benefits for both sides. Obviously, it needs to be done in an educated way to prevent negative side effects, such as rising fears by local populations.

For me, the ecological transformation and refugees are the most pressing issues shared across the Mediterranean and we must pool resources to manage them.

**3. What are the main challenges for Israel now and in the years to come?**

Questions and urgencies have changed since COVID-19. Regarding my business, we were a successful travel brand, but are now practically shut down. In general, the deficit of the country will continue to increase which will be decisive for the future. Looking at the travel industry, many smaller companies being part of the tourism ecosystem will probably cease to exist. Regarding regional opportunities, there have been advances in the past few

months, especially towards Gulf countries. As a brand conceived to be regional from the start, this is an opportunity I look forward to. With no major regional geopolitical breakthroughs for the past ten years, we looked at the Mediterranean in the meantime. All of a sudden, we can explore both options and also follow our original strategy for travel in the Middle East again. If Saudi Arabia opens up, that would be an amazing overland experience and playground for travel: Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE and back through Egypt.

#### 4. How do you see the EU's role in the region?

Israel looks towards Europe to balance out instabilities in the Middle East, for instance, with the Iranian nuclear threat. On a business level, developing a new regional branch of a business on the other shore of the Mediterranean basin, either in Europe, North Africa or the Middle East, could help to alleviate risks. This could also involve some kind of exchange programme for employees, similar to a temporary relocation or a professional Erasmus+ outside the EU. An idea for exchanging best practices is to invite outstanding employees from African and Middle Eastern branches to Europe, to help integrate new forms of business culture and innovation into the very traditional European market and make it more thriving. But also to level off the knowledge and professionalism that exists on both sides of the Mediterranean. This will create a more levelled situa-

tion economically, where you can discuss collaboration with much less fear.

#### 5. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can address together?

Many of the needs Europe has nowadays can be addressed by the Mediterranean region. The region can provide the workforce or cultural enrichment that improves the quality and experience of life.

The real challenge, however, is that instead of thinking about how to pool resources in a coordinated and integrated manner, countries are increasingly looking at themselves and into their own problems, concerned with building bigger walls and barriers. This will trigger even bigger migration effects. But if the challenge is correctly handled in the first place, people become bridges and each side benefits. If Europeans reach out to countries of the Mediterranean, be it the Middle East or North Africa, there are many business opportunities and prospects for collaboration, for example, regarding investments.

For Europeans, travelling to Israel and exploring local narratives through sustainable cultural tourism provides amazing experiences. With reasonable travel costs, tourists contribute to improving the living standards of local communities. My tourism company also offers narrative tours. An example where we also covered a political topic is the city of Hebron, where there

are a Jewish settler community and a larger Palestinian community, with usually a lot of tension. We spend a half day with each community, to hear the narratives at first hand, ask questions and for visitors to formulate their own opinions.

There is some (immaterial) personal gain as well: people return inspired and with more awareness and understanding of the political realities than what is vehiculated in the media. Awareness which might also render them less fearful of engaging with those communities in the future. In terms of experience and sustainability, I encourage slow(er) cultural tourism by overland travel, for which easy, user-friendly and cheap border crossings and facilitated visa regulations are a prerequisite.

We believe that if we have a vested interest in offering a service to tourists and processing narratives through them, this often leads to cooperation and familiarity with one another, which can be a bottom-up approach to something that is not working so well top-down.

#### 6. Can you share with us a success story in the region?

When establishing Abraham Hostels in Jerusalem, we also wanted to offer tours to Jordan. Being geographically close, many tourists coming from afar would also want to visit Petra or Amman. We set up a joint venture with a partner from East Jerusalem: weekly tours from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to

Jordan, visiting Jerash, Petra and Wadi Rum. Over time, it became apparent that the land border crossing at Allenby Bridge, mostly used by Palestinians, was not adapted to the flux of tourists anymore. So, on both the Israeli and the Jordanian sides, the level of service was improved and infrastructure upgraded, to serve both Palestinians and tourists. This example shows that also locals crossing here benefitted from the upgraded land crossings, with more personnel and better systems.

Our teams are now also closely befriended on a personal level. Israelis, Jordanians, Palestinians – considering ourselves as one team, we have reached a level of integration where we do not care about who manages operations on the Israeli or the Jordanian side. Through the tours, we have also supported many small and medium-sized businesses mainly on the Jordanian side, such as the camps we cooperate with outside of Petra. We really believe in tourism as a bridge builder.



# Testimonial by **Anthony Rahayel**

Awarded Food and Hospitality  
Blogger ("NoGarlicNoOnions"),

**Lebanon**



Anthony Rahayel, dental surgeon by profession, turned into full-time Lebanese culinary aficionado, and winner of the “World Street Food Blogger of 2019” and “World’s Best Expert Food Account of 2020” awards, shares his magic recipe: “ ‘Food unites us’ can be applied to the whole region, because if we are fighting about anything, put us around one table and we are going to spend a memorable time eating, enjoying and considering.”

**1. What does the Mediterranean mean to you?**

For me, the Mediterranean is the centre of the world, where everything started. On a historical level, it is where the Roman Empire spent hundreds of years, where the Ottoman Empire continued, through which the Vikings and the Gauls passed, where the Arabs went to Spain and Portugal.

The Mediterranean connects Europe, Asia and Africa – a richness of history, cultures and flavours. In addition, the Mediterranean has very varied and gentle weather conditions and everything is connected. You can be in France or Morocco in a couple of hours and yet each country has a different culture. We are cousins, not brothers.

**2. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of Euro-Mediterranean relations?**

I described the Mediterranean as a hodgepodge. It also makes things more difficult, because each country considers itself as being the origin and everyone wants to be unique. Another element that complicates things is religion, probably even more so in the Mediterranean because

everything comes together here. Christianity, Islam and Judaism – three of the five major religious groups. This cohabitation can be a source of conflict, but is outweighed by the advantages of Euro-Mediterranean relations. One can easily visit each other, support each other, learn from each other and do business with each other – the possibilities are endless.

### 3. Where do you see the main challenges for Lebanon now and in the years to come?

Lebanon is a country which has much to offer: gentle and welcoming people, happiness, generosity, superb culture of food with more than 500 dishes, successful Lebanese expats around the world, beautiful Nature – and I could go on. The point is that this arouses envy, which is where the challenges start. Unfortunately, Lebanon is a chequebook, in which everybody is writing a cheque, and it has become an area where neighbours come to fight on a land that is not theirs.

### 4. What are the challenges the EU and Mediterranean countries can face together?

Europe is the closest ally of Lebanon. There are large Lebanese expat communities in France, Germany and Sweden. Following Lebanon's independence, relations with France are good and varied, and the French are part of building a Lebanon of the future. Overall,

the connection with Europe is perceived as positive and appreciated.

### 5. Is there a dish or an ingredient that is present all around the Mediterranean?

The main ingredient of Mediterranean food is passion, followed by love, fresh ingredients and colours. These are probably the same across countries, but the approach is different, depending on the culture. Speaking of typical food of the Mediterranean, *hummus*, *baba ghanoush*, *battenjen* and eggplant are everywhere. Also pizza, or the equivalent of the Italian-style pizza – in Lebanon we have a *man'ouche* or cheese for breakfast, the *za'atar* (thyme) *man'ouche*. If we accept that the main ingredients are not food items, but far more (love, passion, colours and freshness), it unites us around the same table.

### 6. Can you share a culinary success story with us?

For me, any success story is something people do not even consider as such. It can be someone cooking for 50 years or taking over a shop or expertise from his parents. Through my work on social media, I am trying to revive the recipes of earlier generations and to open the eyes of younger generations so as not to forget them. Since 2012, I have only one objective: uncover the true face of Lebanon, not the one that makes newspapers' front pages or international television news, but the

real one – the amazing, traditional and authentic Lebanon. I can tell many stories about shop owners, recipe creators and protectors, bakers and hummus cooks. On another level, there is Alan Geaam, the only Lebanese chef with a Michelin star, having his own restaurant in Paris. His story is impressive, as he fled to France in the wake of the Lebanese Civil War.

For me, success is not about money, but how many smiles you draw on people's faces. Over the last year, I published over 1 700 videos on my YouTube channel – "NoGarlicNoOnions" – about those heroes. Instead of a planned world tour, I use the current lockdown to reconnect with them and to organise digital meetings with restaurant owners, chefs and storytellers. We share success stories around the world, highlight ideas and give each other a boost.

There are two hashtags in Arabic describing my main motivation: "#A7laBaladBel3alam" (Lebanon- "Most beautiful country on Earth") and "#Le2metnaBtejma3na" ("Food unites us"). "Food unites us" can be applied to the whole region, because if we are fighting about anything, put us around one table and we are going to spend a memorable time eating, enjoying and considering.

# 4

## Contributors



## Hannah Abdullah

**Senior Research Fellow at the Global Cities Programme, CIDOB**

Hannah Abdullah is a Senior Research Fellow with the Global Cities Programme at CIDOB. Her current research focuses on city diplomacy in the areas of climate change and culture, with a focus on the Euro-Mediterranean region. Recent publications include work on the role of cities in global and European governance and the transition towards sustainable development. Hannah Abdullah holds a PhD in Sociology from the London School of Economics (LSE), an MSc in Cultural Sociology from the LSE and a BA in Art History and Spanish from University College London (UCL). She is an affiliated researcher at the Centre for the Study of Culture, Politics and Society (CECUPS) at the University of Barcelona.



## Adnane Addioui

**Founder, Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship**

Morocco

Adnane Addioui is a social commentator and entrepreneur, committed to enabling creative thinking, entrepreneurship and innovation for the common good in Morocco and the MENA region. He is Co-Founder of the Moroccan Center for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship (MCISE), where he currently serves as Chief Visionary. In 2019, he was appointed member of the Special Commission on the Development Model by King Mohammed VI. He is the former Country Director for Enactus Morocco, a World Bank-IMF Fellow, and an active member of the Junior Chamber International. Adnane Addioui has delivered talks and training courses across the MENA region, Europe and North America and has a business background. He is also a researcher at the Centre for the Study of Culture, Politics and Society (CECUPS) at the University of Barcelona.



## Sana Afouaiz

**Founder & Director, “Womenpreneur Initiative”**

Morocco / Belgium

Sana Afouaiz is an award-winning gender expert and women’s advocate. In 2016, she established “Womenpreneur Initiative”, an organisation with a community of 10 000 women across 20 countries that aims to advance women’s places in the entrepreneurial scene, technology, innovation and society. Through her work, Sana Afouaiz has reached thousands of women, to drive visibility, social impact, and resources for women in the ecosystem and beyond. She has advised the United Nations, the European Commission, corporate institutions and organisations on gender issues.



## Waad Al-Kateab

**Filmmaker & Activist,  
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Syria / United Kingdom

Waad Al-Kateab is a Syrian activist and award-winning documentary filmmaker. She became a citizen journalist in 2011, after protests broke out across Syria against the Assad regime. Her first feature documentary, “For Sama” (2019), documented her life over five years in Aleppo and received worldwide critical acclaim. “For Sama” won numerous awards, including Best Documentary at the BAFTAs and Cannes Film Festival and a nomination for Best Documentary Feature at the Academy Awards. Waad Al-Kateab received several personal recognitions for her work as an activist and filmmaker, including a place in the 2020 Time100 List of Most Influential People. She currently works with Channel 4 News in the United Kingdom, is a mentor to female journalists and dedicates time to her “Action For Sama” advocacy campaign.



## Haizam Amirah-Fernández

**Senior Analyst, Elcano  
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Haizam Amirah-Fernández is Senior Analyst for the Mediterranean and the Arab World at the Elcano Royal Institute and Associate Professor of International Relations at IE School of Global and Public Affairs. He holds a BA from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and an MA in Arab Studies on a Fulbright scholarship from Georgetown University’s Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. He completed his studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) and at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Haizam Amirah-Fernández specialises in international relations, political Islam, intercultural dialogue and transitions to democracy in the Arab world. He has published extensively on Middle Eastern and North African affairs, and has lectured at universities in Europe, MENA countries and the US. He has also worked for the United Nations in New York and has participated in several international research projects. Haizam Amirah-Fernández is a frequent commentator in the Spanish and international media.



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Félix Arteaga is a Senior Analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute and a Lecturer at the Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado. He has a PhD in International Relations and a BSc in Political Science from Madrid’s Universidad Complutense. He also has a degree in Law, holds a Diploma in National Security Management and is a Reserve Officer in the Spanish Armed Forces. He was previously an Associate Lecturer at Madrid’s Universidad Carlos III, taught at Madrid’s Universidad Autónoma and Universidad Complutense and was Senior Analyst at the Instituto de Cuestiones Internacionales and the Civil Guard’s Duque de Ahumada and Internal Security institutes. Between 1999 and 2001, he directed the European Commission’s Security Sector Reform Programme in Paraguay.





## Azita Berar Awad

**Policy Director, Global Labour Organization & Senior Fellow, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies**

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Azita Berar Awad is an internationally renowned political economist and global policy adviser on inclusive social and economic policies. Currently Director of Policy at the Global Labour Organization (GLO), she is also a Senior Fellow at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and holds various teaching positions. She held several senior leadership positions at the International Labour Organization (ILO), including as Director of the Employment Policy Department.

Azita Berar Awad has advised senior policymakers and supported institutions at national and global levels on comprehensive policies, promoting full and decent employment and gender-inclusive sustainable development. She has authored numerous publications and founded the first Global Interdisciplinary Policy Research Network on Youth Transitions in 2020.



## Moussa Bourekba

**Researcher, CIDOB & Associate Professor, Ramon Llull University**

Moussa Bourekba is a Researcher at CIDOB and Associate Professor in International Relations at Ramon Llull University (Barcelona). Prior to joining CIDOB, he was Junior Research Fellow at the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed, Barcelona). He also worked as a consultant for the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI, Brussels). At CIDOB, after being Project Manager for SAHWA, an EU-funded project that aims at analysing youth conditions and expectations in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region, he now focuses on processes of radicalisation, violent extremism in Europe and North Africa, and Islam in Western countries. His main areas of interest are Arab youth, violent extremism and Islam in Western countries.



## Koert Debeuf

**Editor-in-Chief, EUobserver & Research Fellow**

Belgium

Koert Debeuf is a philosopher and historian. Former Advisor to the Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt. In 2011, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) of the European Parliament sent Debeuf to Cairo in order to follow the Arab revolutions in the region. He has travelled extensively in the Arab world, from Morocco to Turkey. Koert Debeuf created Arab Leaders for Freedom and Democracy, a network of leading political leaders. Now he is Editor-in-Chief of the EUobserver and research fellow at the universities of Oxford and Brussels. He is the author of the books, *Inside the Arab Revolution. Three Years on the Front Line of the Arab Spring* (2014) and *Tribalization. Why war is coming* (2019).



## Carmen Descamps

**Project Manager,  
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Carmen Descamps is Project Manager at the Madrid office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. She contributes to developing a new approach to interregional collaboration in the Mediterranean by strengthening cooperation in strategic core areas and political dialogue between political parties, academic institutions and civil society organisations. She also bridges the gap between FNF offices in the Euro-Mediterranean region and headquarters in Germany.

Carmen Descamps previously worked as European Affairs Manager at the Foundation's Brussels office, as well as for the European Commission, the German Federal Foreign Office and the *Institut für Europäische Politik* (IEP). She graduated in Franco-German Studies, European Studies and Political Sciences from Sciences Po Paris and Free University Berlin.



## Schams El Ghoneimi

**Founder, "Syrians Got Talent"  
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France – Egypt / Belgium

Schams El Ghoneimi founded a band of Syrian musicians called "Syrians Got Talent" in 2016 to fight clichés about Syrian refugees in Europe. In the aftermath of the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, over 20 public concerts took place across Belgium, France and Switzerland. A debate engaging the public and musicians takes place halfway through each concert, sharing human stories, fears and dreams, all while discovering music as a universal language. Among others, the band has played for the UNESCO, EU, *Médecins Sans Frontières* and at locations like Brussels' *Bozar*, Liège's *Cité Miroir* and Marseille's *Villa Méditerranée*.

Schams El Ghoneimi works as Political Adviser at the European Parliament.



## Gonzalo Escribano

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Spanish Open University  
(UNED)**

Gonzalo Escribano heads the Energy and Climate Programme at the Elcano Royal Institute and is also Professor of Applied Economics at the Spanish Open University (UNED). He holds a PhD in Economics from Madrid's Complutense University, and has been a visiting researcher at Florida State University and the Autonomous University of Madrid, and associate researcher at the Centro Español de Relaciones Internacionales (Fundación Ortega y Gasset). He also lectures in different postgraduate programmes at numerous Spanish and foreign universities on Energy Geopolitics and the Political Economy of North Africa. He has participated in various research projects, including the EU's VII Framework and several Euro-Mediterranean FEMISE projects funded by the European Commission. He has received the Research Award of the Spanish Economic and Social Council.



## Ángeles Espinosa

**Journalist & Senior Correspondent, *El País***

Spain / United Arab Emirates

Ángeles Espinosa is a Senior Correspondent of the Spanish newspaper, *El País*, specialised in the Middle East. She is now based in Dubai and was previously in Tehran, Cairo and Beirut. A foreign correspondent since 1987, she has covered the main issues and confrontations in the region, and interviewed many of its leaders, including the late Saudi King Abdullah and Sultan Qaboos of Oman, King Abdullah of Jordan, Presidents of Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran and Yemen.

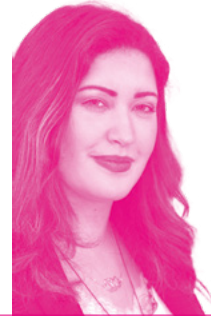
Ángeles Espinosa has authored three books (*El tiempo de las mujeres*, *El reino del desierto*, *Días de guerra*) and has received numerous awards for her journalistic work. Among others, she has received two Ortega y Gasset Journalism Awards for the coverage of the Afghan and Iraq war (2002, 2003), the prize for the best Spanish journalist in 2010 and the Spanish Order of Civil Merit.



## Miguel Hernando de Larramendi

**Member of the Scientific Council, Elcano Royal Institute & Chair, University of Castilla-La Mancha**

Miguel Hernando de Larramendi is Chair of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, where he leads the Study Group on Arab and Muslim Societies (GRESAM) and the research project "Crises and regional processes of change in North Africa". He is a member of the Scientific Council of the Elcano Royal Institute. His research focuses on political systems in the Maghreb, and Spain's foreign policy towards the Mediterranean. Among other books, he has co-edited *Foreign Policy in North Africa. Navigating Global, Regional and Domestic Transformations* (2020); *El Instituto Hispano-árabe de Cultura. Orígenes y evolución de la diplomacia pública hacia el mundo árabe* (2015); *Mohamed VI; Política y cambio social en Marruecos*, (2011); *La política exterior española hacia el Magreb. Actores e intereses* (2009).



## Kholoud Kahime

**President, NGO "CI2R2C" & Professor, *Ecole Supérieure de Technologie Essaouira***

Morocco

Kholoud Kahime is President of the NGO "CI2R2C" (International Centre for Research and Capacity Development), and University Professor of Environment at the *Ecole Supérieure de Technologie* in Essaouira. She holds a PhD in Ecology and Epidemiology from Cadi Ayyad University Morocco. Kholoud Kahime was the first Arab woman to receive the Albert II Prize in Monaco in 2015 and conducted part of her research at the NASA Goddard Space Center in the USA. Her research focuses on health, the impact of climate change and sustainable development, including sustainable mobility and smart urban development.

Nominated "Female Scientific Leader in Morocco" by the Next Einstein Foundation in 2018, she has published extensively and is also a consultant for GIZ, the German development agency.



## Akram Kharief

**Journalist & Founder, Blog  
“Menadefense.net”**

Algeria

Akram Kharief is an independent journalist and analyst specialised in defence and security affairs in the MENA region. He founded *Menadefense.net* in 2011, a leading Internet media about defence and security in the Middle East and North Africa. Akram Kharief is a regular author for the Middle East Eye, *Jeune Afrique*, *Le Monde Diplomatique* and Moscow Defense Brief.



## Selim Kharrat

**President & Co-Founder,  
NGO “Al-Bawsala”**

Tunisia

Selim Kharrat has worked as a Management Consultant for NGOs, associations and organisations in the field of international solidarity and human rights. After the revolution, he returned to Tunisia to co-found the watchdog NGO “Al-Bawsala” (“The Compass”), a parliamentary monitoring organisation. Selim Kharrat is also co-founder of the “Cahiers de la Liberté”, an association fostering political awareness. He blogs actively on the political and social situation in Tunisia, and continues to collaborate with the main international cooperation and civil society actors in Tunisia.



## Raphaëlle Macaron

**Illustrator & Comic-book Artist**

Lebanon / France

Raphaëlle Macaron is an illustrator and comic-book artist. Born and raised in Lebanon, where she completed her studies in Illustration and Comics, she is now based in Paris, working as a freelance illustrator and author. Her work is largely inspired by the music she listens to and the records she collects. Her first book, *Les Terrestres*, a graphic novel documentary co-written with French journalist Noël Mamère, explores the collapse of our world and alternative lifestyles. Raphaëlle Macaron is currently working on her next book.



## Gal Mor

**Director & Co-Founder,  
Abraham Hostels and Tours**

### Israel

Growing up between Israel, England, Canada and travelling to Europe after completing High School, Gal Mor discovered the richness of various cultures and countries from his early years. After a trip around the world, he acquired a BA in International Relations and Communications. Gal Mor has worked for the Israeli Embassy in Berlin and was the Israel Regional Director of Sandemans New Europe tour operators. Currently, he is the Director and Co-Founder of Abraham Hostels and Tours in Jerusalem.



## Francesco Pasetti

**Research Fellow, CIDOB &  
Adjunct Professor, Institut  
Barcelona d'Estudis  
Internacionals (IBEI) and  
Pompeu Fabra University**

Francesco Pasetti is a Research Fellow at CIDOB in the area of Migrations, and Adjunct Professor at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) and at Pompeu Fabra University. His interest in “migration matters” dates back to his experience at Bocconi University, where he developed a project on diasporic media. He later delved into the study of migrant integration and its politics as a PhD candidate. In his thesis, Francesco Pasetti addressed the issue of integration policies in Europe through a mixed-method investigation, paying special attention to the political imaginaries that lie beyond citizenship regimes in Italy and Spain. Since 2017, he has specialised in policy evaluation based on indicators and is currently working on policies and political discourses on refugees, with special attention to the Spanish context.



## Eduard Soler i Lecha

**Senior Research Fellow, CIDOB**

Eduard Soler i Lecha is a Senior Research Fellow at CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs). He holds a PhD in International Relations from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, where he is affiliated as a part-time lecturer in International Relations. Since 2013, he has also led the El Hiwar project on Euro-Arab diplomacy at the College of Europe (Bruges). In 2010, he was seconded to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an Advisor in the Directorate-General for the Mediterranean, the Maghreb and the Middle East. Between 2016 and 2019, he was Scientific Coordinator of MENARA, a European project on geopolitical shifts in the Middle East and North Africa. His areas of expertise are geopolitics of the MENA region, foresight, Euro-Mediterranean relations, Turkey and Spanish foreign policy. He is a member of the Observatory of European Foreign Policy, FIMAM (the Spanish network of researchers working on Arab and Muslim Studies), EuroMeSCo, and is on the advisory boards of *Mediterranean Politics* and IEMed's *Mediterranean Yearbook*.



## Veysel Ok

**Lawyer & Co-Founder, Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA)**

Turkey

Veysel Ok is a leading Turkish free speech and press freedom lawyer, who has defended some of the country's most prominent journalists. After graduating from Istanbul University's Law Faculty, he started his career working as a lawyer for the now-defunct *Taraf* newspaper. In 2018, he co-founded the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA), which provides pro-bono legal support to writers and journalists who have been subjected to intimidation, surveillance, smear campaigns and legal harassment. Ok has defended the novelist, Ahmet Altan and *Die Welt* correspondent, Deniz Yücel. Veysel Ok himself has faced surveillance and legal harassment for standing up for press freedom.



## Anthony Rahayel

**Food & Hospitality Blogger, "NoGarlicNoOnions"**

Lebanon

Anthony Rahayel is a dental surgeon by profession, but rather sees himself as an advocate of great food since 2012. He aims through his blog "NoGarlicNoOnions" (NGNO) and related social media to showcase a different Lebanon and to connect people over their love of great food and their interest in the country and its traditional recipes.

Anthony Rahayel is the founder of Lebanon's "Souk el Akel" street food market and has won two major international awards as "World Street Food Blogger" (2019) and "World's Best Expert Food Account" (2020).



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## Partners

# CIDOB

## Barcelona Centre for International Affairs

[www.cidob.org](http://www.cidob.org)

CIDOB is an international affairs research centre that, through excellence and relevance, seeks to analyse the global issues that affect political, social and governance dynamics, from the international to the local. As a recognised independent civil society-born institution with a long history, CIDOB pursues excellence and rigour in its analyses, publications and projects. It aims to be a useful tool for society, to ensure open access to knowledge and to promote the study of the international issues that affect citizens' daily lives. CIDOB seeks relevance and social impact for its research and attends to public institutions' needs and requests for international information, aiming to influence decision-making processes and to provide alternative visions.

CIDOB also promotes innovation in the analysis of global politics, with the aim of transcending classic international relations'

structures and considering the growing impact of global phenomena on local realities. Innovation in research also involves opening up new lines of research to keep pace with current social transformations.

From Barcelona, CIDOB analyses the influence of the international on the local and the definition and construction of the international from the local. Thematic relevance and the analysis of aspects of the international agenda that prompt greatest interest in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain and Europe prevail in its publications and activities. CIDOB also seeks to mobilise a large number of social actors, to reach new audiences and to network with public institutions and civil society. Its objective is to continue being a leading European and international centre for the study of global politics, as well as a meeting point and window to the world.

# CIDOB

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# Elcano Royal Institute

[www.realinstitutoelcano.org](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org)

The Elcano Royal Institute is a think tank specialised in international and strategic studies, conducted from a Spanish, European and global perspective. Its goal is to promote knowledge of the current international situation and of Spain's foreign relations, as well as to provide a focal point for debating and generating ideas that may prove useful in decision-making processes. The overall concern is to be a meeting point for the exchange of ideas and the search for consensus in a spirit dominated by the defence of democracy, multilateralism, the social market economy, freedom and human rights.

Created in 2001 as a private foundation, the Elcano Royal Institute's organisational structure balances public and private interests and fosters the exchange of ideas in a plural and independent environment, providing the scope for diverse political and social out-

looks. Its highest governing body is its Board of Trustees, under the honorary presidency of H.M. the King. The Institute's work appears in the form of a wide variety of publications and reports, which are freely accessible via its website and blog. It also organises working groups, seminars and conferences. In order to enhance its presence and influence abroad, it participates in numerous international networks and projects.

The Elcano Royal Institute's research is structured along thematic and geographical lines. The former include – among others – energy and climate change, security and defence, the global economy, international terrorism, the image of Spain abroad, and demography and migration. Geographically, Europe, the Atlantic space, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, North Africa and the Middle East are of particular interest to the Institute.



# Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

[www.freiheit.org/madrid](http://www.freiheit.org/madrid)

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) is a German political foundation dedicated to the promotion of political education and liberal principles, such as human rights, free market economy, the rule of law and liberal democracy. The Foundation is working to promote the principles of freedom and dignity for all people in all areas of society in Germany and in more than 60 countries around the world (Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas). Founded in 1958, the Foundation's headquarters are in Potsdam (near Berlin).

The Madrid office of the Foundation seeks to strengthen cooperation and dialogue among political parties, scientific institutions and civil society actors around the Mediterranean, in order to foster interregional cooperation in the region and to develop a liberal approach to geostrategic demands and opportunities in the Mare Nostrum.



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**Editors:** Haizam Amirah-Fernández, Carmen Descamps and Eduard Soler i Lecha.

**Graphic design:** Roger Castro ([www.monzonbcn.com](http://www.monzonbcn.com))

**Finalisation of the manuscript:** April 2021

**Disclaimer:** The present Report is a joint publication by CIDOB, Elcano Royal Institute and Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Madrid. The opinions and views expressed herein are those of the authors and interviewees alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the institution.

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