

report

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AS A DRIVER OF COOPERATION IN THE 5+5 DIALOGUE

Common Challenges, Shared Management

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Hotel El Aurassi, Algiers, 25-27 June 2018



Family photo of the III Forum MedThink 5+5. El Aurassi Hotel, Algiers

Introduction”

The III MedThink 5+5 Forum welcomed more than fifty experts and representatives in Algiers with the ambition to open a collective reflection on the growing interregional flows of people and resources in the Western Mediterranean, whose management can only be shared. Thus, the thematic corpus of the III MedThink 5+5 Forum was divided into four large blocks according to the nature of these movements, their geographic location and their links with major regional development constraints, with special attention to youths. The first session dealt with the challenges of intra-regional mobility from the perspective of rethinking the security-development binomial. The second session, the prevention of violent extremism, was addressed from the point of view of youths and women. The third session reflected on the role of the water-energy-food security Nexus in the 5+5 area. The fourth session returned to the youth community in the Western Mediterranean, particularly with regard to

education and employment challenges and concerns. For the first time since its inception, all these aspects were discussed in a final roundtable that tackled the current state and prospects of regional cooperation in the Western Mediterranean.

This is the third year of an initiative that seeks to consolidate the MedThink 5+5, a sub-regional network of think tanks that was established in May 2016 with the support of more than thirty institutions from the ten Western Mediterranean countries of the 5+5 Dialogue: Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia. The MedThink 5+5 works around the Western Mediterranean Forum, its ministerial formats and high-level working groups by cementing a useful partnership with public officials, regional cooperation organisations and civil society with the goal of serving as a practical model for greater regional cooperation.

The network aims to respond to basic needs within the system of the 5+5 Dialogue by enhancing dialogue through the organisation of conferences, seminars and symposia with key players in the region. It also serves as a platform of joint research and dissemination in order to provide output to the policy-making leadership of the Western Mediterranean Forum.

Two annual conferences and three thematic seminars (Tunis 2016, Milan 2017 and Rabat 2017) have so far been held with the participation of over sixty think tanks, research centres and public and private institutions. Beyond their symbolic importance as a reference point for experts in the Western Mediterranean, these events have also given rise to a number of publications that have reached the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 5+5 Dialogue countries.

Opening Session: Human Development as a Driver of Cooperation in the 5+5 Dialogue

The participants at the III MedThink 5+5 Forum were welcomed by Mr. Liess Boukra, General Director of the National Institute of Strategic Global Studies (NISGS) and Mr. Senén Florensa, President of the Executive Committee of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). On this occasion, they had the honour to share the floor with His Excellency Ambassador **Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), His Excellency Mr. **Taïeb Baccouche**, Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), His Excellency Ambassador **Mohamed Hanneche**, Director General for Europe at the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Ambassador **Santiago Cabanas**, Spanish Ambassador to Algiers, and all of them strongly committed to the MedThink 5+5 project.

This III MedThink 5+5 Forum was particularly acclaimed for its practical and symbolic impact. On the one hand, it demonstrates the growing connection between the network of experts and decision-makers in the Western Mediterranean targeted by the initiative launched by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the 5+5 Dialogue in Valletta in 2012. On the other, it marked the beginning of a north-south interplay that is to continue in the future. Furthermore, this time, the entire programme of the meeting expressed the desire to drive forward human development as a major pillar and ambition of Western Mediterranean cooperation. To this end, a collective reflection was conducted on the growing intra-regional flows of goods and people, but also of ideas whose management can only be shared.

Since its creation, the agenda of the MedThink network has always given special importance to a number of topics that remain at the heart of the Western Mediterranean. In this respect, the promotion of political dialogue, economic development and cooperation are intertwined within the framework of a major challenge, namely regional integration, particularly in a south-south direction.



Mr. Nasser Kamel, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

That is why this forum was referred to as the engine of concrete and fruitful regional cooperation in the Mediterranean and a seed incubator, a model for greater effective cooperation on a regional scale. The informal nature of its exchanges makes it possible, according to the opening presentations, to engage in innovative joint reflections, to consult and test ideas together, and to provide concrete and operational solutions to the challenges that confront all our countries. It was also seen as a sign of the strengthening of the 5+5 Dialogue, which was said to perfectly illustrate the principle of “variable geometry” that currently governs Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The 5+5 Dialogue holds the assets to become the “pivot of the Europe-Africa axis”

Against this background, this session paid special attention to the need to place human development at the centre of the Western Mediterranean agenda. Solidarity, complementarity and cooperation were mentioned as increasingly important in the design of new policies and the development of new strategies for a path of regional integration from which all parties should benefit. However, it was warned that social protest and youths movements occasionally sound the alarm, to which we must pay attention. It is for these reasons that one of the most important sounding boards increasingly resides, according to one of the participants, in the 5+5 Dialogue, which was defined as “the pivot of the Europe-Africa axis.”

The four themes of the Forum, namely migration, terrorism, food security and youths, were said to be of great relevance and urgency for different reasons. Indeed, it was firstly noted that African migration tends more and more to evolve towards intra-African migration south and north of the Sahara. Thus migration and mobility are increasingly perceived as factors of development and no longer only as factors of insecurity.

Cooperation in the field of migratory flows emanating from conflict zones, whether endogenous or exogenous or both, appeared to the participants as “insufficient or not sufficiently adopted,” including in their relationship with radicalisation and terrorism. In addition, it was noted that much work needs to be done to make the “Water Strategy” in the Western Mediterranean, signed in 2015, more efficient and connected to energy and climate issues, to ensure the best food security in the Western Mediterranean region. Finally, it was claimed that youths and their education remain a major concern for the region, which aims to ensure one of the fundamental human rights, that of employment, which was defined as the main guarantor of human dignity and inclusive socioeconomic development.

Finally, there was also mention of the mutual interest of institutions like the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in further strengthening their strategic partnership within the framework of the 5+5 Dialogue in order to meet the security, economic and political challenges faced in the Western Mediterranean and, as pointed out during the presentations, to honour their commitments to the peoples of the region.

First session: “From Migration to Mobility: Inversion of the Security-Development Relationship”

With a view to addressing the root causes of the successive migratory crises that have hit the Western Mediterranean in the last few years, this session has reflected on the features and perspectives that have turned mobility as a source of potential shared enrichment into a challenging issue around the Mediterranean basin.

Indeed, since the beginning of the new millennium, the concept of “mobility” has progressively replaced the word “migration” in many aspects. If back in the seventies mobility mainly referred to internal flows of people within countries, today it addresses the choice to move between countries as a result of globalisation and north-south disparities. In the Mediterranean area, this phenomenon has gained unprecedented momentum in the last few years, with notable consequences in the Western Mediterranean, where traditional countries of origin have also become countries of transit and destination. In addition, the securitisation of transnational borders has changed the shape and nature of socio-political perceptions about migrations.

Be that as it may, there is a wide consensus about the impossibility of countries tackling this global phenomenon unilaterally. Nevertheless, the International Dialogue on Migration has not yet achieved a common vision on this issue. This is in part due to the fact that, under the umbrella of “migration”, regular and irregular flows of people coexist with human traffic and other forms of exploitation. In this regard, the fact that a vast majority of these cases find their origins in economic disparities and asymmetric opportunities should be taken into account. That is why development was placed at the basis of the discussion, which was built around a few initial questions: What has been the outcome of the initiatives implemented in response to this reality? What is the role of diaspora against xenophobia and in favour of development both in countries of origin and host countries? What should be the role of the 5+5 Dialogue in this framework?

In the context of globalisation, the concept of ‘mobility’ has gradually replaced that of migration



The first session focused on migration flows in the Western Mediterranean

The lack of integration among Maghreb countries, the rise of racism and xenophobia in Europe and the spread of extremism among youths were addressed as some of the major factors behind the upsurge of instability in the Western Mediterranean. In this respect, it is essential to bear in mind two central aspects of these trends. On the one hand, extremist behaviours find fertile ground mostly among Muslims born in Europe. On the other, the mounting wave of populism throughout the region leads countries to adopt incoherent decisions with harmful consequences. Furthermore, European leaders are failing to provide solutions to Europe's aging population and it is losing its weight in the global market. Faced with this situation, a review of the current approach towards migration could actually bring win-win solutions.

Converging Crises

Behind the social unrest generated by the migratory phenomenon in the Mediterranean, the participants in the session agreed, on the one hand, on the responsibility of countries in the management of flows of people and, on the other, the role of the media in the dissemination of a distorted image of migratory patterns. With regard to the first aspect, the securitisation of borders and the proliferation of short-term solutions to the various crises that converge in the Mediterranean have meant that even accepted principles such as non-refoulement are no longer respected in many cases. With regard to the impact

of the media discourse on migration, several participants stressed that, contrary to public belief, most of the flows of people occur within African countries. Similarly, between 80% and 90% of refugees remain in developing countries.

Furthermore, the growing tendency to link migration and terrorism, together with the presentation of the phenomenon in terms of crisis and threat rather than reciprocal gains, deepens the short-term, incoherent and ineffective management of a phenomenon that should be mutually beneficial, given the complementarities between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Within this framework, countries tend to find themselves involved in the trilemma *national development-national security-international security*.

The government and media management of flows has helped to spread a distorted image of migration

Faced with this socio-political alarmism, the root causes of migration are often neglected and scant attention is paid to tackle them directly. Asymmetric living conditions largely explain the direction and weight of the flows of people across the Western Mediterranean. Deprivation, lack of opportunities, low levels of trust in the system and insecurity push people to leave their countries. Besides, the demographic structure of southern countries further exacerbates this trend, as labour markets cannot absorb young people's need for jobs. Related to this, we are moving towards a vicious circle whereby migration deprives countries of valuable labour resources and induces a trend of stagnation that further pushes people to migrate. This is one of the reasons why the social and economic segmentation of migration in countries of origin and destination appears to be unevenly shared.

The root causes of migration are often neglected

The Lack of Common Answers

Unfortunately, in spite of the evidence that the multiple challenges presented by this phenomenon cannot be addressed individually, multilateralism and cooperation in this area have witnessed a decline in recent years that has impeded the achievement of comprehensive and consensual solutions. The rise of populism has also brought about a major boost to xenophobia, which serves to justify the securitisation option and the failure to respect internationally agreed principles by some EU member states.

Only countries of the South have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers

At the same time, this retreat from multilateralism has made it extremely difficult to develop the international dialogue on migration and to reach a global pact on migration. In this regard, the fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Migrant Worker has only been ratified by the countries of the south was mentioned during the session.



The participants agreed on the need to provide collective responses

Brain Drain versus Brain Gain: the Role of Diaspora

In any case, among the most recurrent ideas was the possibility of turning the major challenges of the Western Mediterranean area into great opportunities. In this way, demographic complementarity would only be an example of the potential of these flows, as is the transfer of skills, which was highlighted during the discussion as an essential element for the proper functioning of the globalised economy.

The diaspora as a catalyst for development plays an essential role in both home and host countries

One of the keys to turning the vicious circle into a virtuous one lies in the application of economic solutions to the political problems that this phenomenon entails. Another essential key is the role of the diaspora, which can act as a catalyst for development both in the country of origin and the country of destination. In the former, if links are kept alive, it can contribute to the development of economic and social activity while, in the latter, it can act in favour of the economic and social integration of migrant citizens.

Proposals and Recommendations

Throughout the session, several participants pointed out the need to create a sort of Marshall Plan for the countries from which the greatest migration flows to Europe originate. However, the proposal also raises some scepticism, given the limited guarantees that a far-reaching economic plan can help to bring about the structural change that would be needed in the countries of origin and transit. In this regard, some of the programmes that the European Union and other institutions have launched to integrate African countries into global value chains were mentioned, such as the European External Investment Plan, but its ability to induce major changes in the economic structure of these countries is, in any case, insufficient and slow.

Therefore, there were mentions of a “human security approach” that redefines the concept of security as a subjective experience at the micro level. The concept of welfare investment was also discussed, with a particular focus on improving social welfare. This, however, is in contradiction with the austerity policies that currently dominate the macroeconomic policies of the countries on the Mediterranean coast.

Second session: “Towards Strengthened Cooperation against Terrorism and Radicalisation: the Role of Youths in the 5+5 Area”

The second session of the III MedThink 5+5 Forum brought together experts and political decision-makers around one of the most debated issues in the region today. The rise of radicalisation and extremism in the Western Mediterranean has been treated with a dual emphasis on young people, both as the main victims of this phenomenon and as potential catalysts for a change of course in this area. The participants in the session tried to respond to intricate questions about what the priorities of the 5+5 countries in this field are, the most vulnerable profiles and the main strengths of young people and women in dealing with this phenomenon.

According to several participants, while extremism can take different forms and ideologies, a number of patterns are often identified behind it that lead young people into these contexts. Frustration, social discontent, unemployment and marginalisation are some of the phenomena that have pushed young people to radicalise. In this connection, the session highlighted the relationship between the socioeconomic and political roots of this complex phenomenon, without neglecting the role that recent changes within family life, education or governance have played in this regard.

Young people are both the main targets of extremism and catalysts for a change of course

Changing Stereotypes

One of the main topics of discussion was the importance of deconstructing and overcoming the stereotypes that have stigmatised Mediterranean youths and excluded them from the political agenda. In this regard, the need to improve their socioeconomic and political integration was addressed, especially in view of the current reluctance to bring young people closer to the decision-making spheres. For this reason, some participants called for an official recognition of the role of youths in the active fight against extremism and radicalisation, as well as a driving force for change in the broader context.

The stereotypes that have stigmatized young Mediterranean people and excluded them from political programmes must be overcome

Special emphasis was placed throughout the session on different ways of addressing the phenomenon under discussion. For example, programmes of

de-radicalisation may adopt a specific approach, centred on ideological rehabilitation; or an implicit approach more interested in the individual. A holistic and bottom-up approach involving families, teachers and civil society as a whole would be necessary. In their view, the aim should be to increase the commitment and empowerment of young people, taking into account their specificities as a heterogeneous social group.

However, some participants focused on pointing out that the role of young people is not only potentially positive, but indeed already a fact. In this regard, it was argued that young people are currently very active in the prevention of extremism, at a level comparable to that of diplomats, the police or the security sector. For instance, it was explained that young people are working on changing the discourse, trying to influence the media and to become part of international frameworks that favour the involvement of young people. However, it was noted that these dynamics give rise to civil society elites that are progressively disconnecting from the field of action and distancing themselves from the state as a whole.

The Role of Education and the Labour Market

The gap between professional requirements and educational background is a source of economic and personal frustration

Most of the presentations facilitated a reflection on the linkage between education, labour market and radicalisation. According to several participants, the mismatch between the qualifications provided by education and the skills required in the labour market is a major source of frustration both economically and personally. The high rates of unemployment and school dropout that are characteristic of the Western Mediterranean countries are, according to the experts, one of the essential keys to understanding the repercussions of the phenomenon of radicalisation in this area. They also expressed concern about the lack of cooperation among Western Mediterranean countries, especially in the south, in the field of education and mobility.

The role of work as a potential barrier to extremism was also discussed. As pointed out, the type of work largely determines the extent to which it can be an element of autonomy and dignity capable of counteracting extreme

tendencies. Likewise, in the realm of education, special attention was paid to sensitive subjects like religion, emphasising the importance of applying them in such a way that they do not induce problems of an epistemological order. The formation of imams was also mentioned as a key factor in countering the phenomenon of radicalisation.



The second session focused on youth and radicalization in the 5+5 Dialogue countries

Social Dialogue

With regards to the social commitment to countering radicalisation, it was stressed on various occasions that fostering social dialogue should bring together a wide array of actors comprising family, politicians, educators, and local and regional groups. In this realm, the role of women was particularly stressed in many of the contexts mentioned. According to a number of participants, women have an essential role within the structure of family, but also in education and, more specifically, in the religious field. Some participants pointed out the successful projects already carried out in Maghreb countries with the education of imam women. Others called for this option to be further explored.

In any event, for the consolidation of a fruitful dialogue, several experts pointed again to the need to engage young people. The challenge, according to them, is to play a supportive and accompanying role, but not to replace or ignore them when taking decisions that concern them directly.

Therefore, participants recalled that efforts are needed to integrate young people into the socioeconomic and political environment and to establish a bottom-up approach to the issue of their role in the prevention and treatment of extremism. In this regard, it would be a question of training “young multipliers”, capable of training other young people at the same time as they are trained themselves.

Recommendations

In view of the realities described and the challenges identified, the participants agreed on the need to strengthen dialogue at both local and interstate levels. They underlined the importance of initiatives such as the roadmap adopted by the UfM Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2017 or the OSCE’s Malaga Decalogue, both aimed at strengthening cooperation in the prevention of extremism.

Another major aspect to be tackled concerns religious, formal and non-formal education. The participants discussed the need to provide education for “world citizenship”. Reference was also made to the urgency of revising textbooks and increasing intra-regional cooperation in religious education, both at the school level and in the training of imams.

Any solution must be human rights-based

Finally, most of the participants warned against securitising this challenge and recalled that any kind of solution must be “human rights-centred” and avoid any kind of “ghettoisation” of the young people most likely to be marginalised.

Third session: “The Energy-Water-Food Security Triangle in the Western Mediterranean”

The third session brought together researchers and representatives of institutions linked to sustainable development in the Mediterranean and, more specifically, to the articulation of a sustainable ecosystem based on the water-energy-food triangle. In this way, the participants offered different yet complementary perspectives on the challenges afflicting the Western Mediterranean countries. The entire discussion was marked by the evidence of the profound impact of climate change on the Mediterranean area and particularly on the countries of the southern shore.

The session started with the presentation of data and cases showing the strong interdependence of the nexus resources as well as of the projections of their growing demand in the years to come. Among the figures provided by UN Water, it was stressed that agriculture accounts for 70% of global water withdrawal, 75% of all industrial water withdrawals are used for energy production, and that 90% of global power generation is water intensive. It was also noted that 72% of water resources in the Mediterranean are concentrated on the northern shore.

The discussion highlighted the evolution of the concept to a quadrangular formula (water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus) and the questions and the debate focused on the bottlenecks associated with water-energy investments, request for concrete examples of application of the nexus, on the 5+5 group mechanisms and decisions, as well as on the wider challenges related to pressures generated by migration.

Furthermore, during the session, the components of the draft UfM WEG Work Programme and Work Plan on the Nexus – run under the ad hoc UfM Task Force on the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus - were presented. They consist of building the background for policy interventions and investment identification/prioritisation; providing tools for introducing and operationalising

The Nexus approach could consider a quadrangular formula that includes water, energy, food and the ecosystem

the nexus approach; nexus governance settings; nexus knowledge; and designing and implementing pilot interventions with replication potential.

Challenges Ahead

The Mediterranean is “a hotspot of climate change”

The participants in this session agreed that, as mentioned in one of the presentations, the Mediterranean is now “a hotspot of climate change.” With data and estimates from the Euromed Centre on Climate Change, the debate was based on the pessimistic projections of the climate conditions in the Mediterranean for 2050. Among other figures, it was highlighted that the average temperature will rise by 2-3°C, that rainfall will drop by between 5% and 20% and that extreme weather events will be more common and harmful. These changes will have a direct impact on crops and water availability, which is already a problem today, especially in the south. In this regard, it was stressed that one of the most controversial aspects of the situation in the Mediterranean is that, while the countries of the north of the basin contribute highly on the central causes of climate change, it is the countries of the south that are most likely to suffer its effects.

While the North of the basin contributes significantly to climate change, the South suffers more from its consequences



The third session triggered a debate on water, energy and food security as pillars of sustainability in the Western Mediterranean

In relation to these developments, it was stressed that too often the interaction between water, food and energy in the Mediterranean has been characterised by distortions that have triggered negative externalities rather than positive

synergies. As an example, the high level of use of fossil fuels for water and food production was mentioned, while huge amounts of water are used for energy production and water-intensive crops. The use of food for the production of biofuels, which generates a rise in prices and increases their volatility, was also mentioned. Finally, attention was drawn to the use of oil revenues to import water and subsidise agricultural production, adding pressure on internal and external water resources.

The Triangle on the Western Mediterranean Agenda

As demonstrated by international initiatives such as Rio+20, the water-energy-food security nexus has gained great importance in recent years and has been placed on the political agenda of the Western Mediterranean. In the framework of this session, some of the initiatives currently being implemented in the Western Mediterranean to reverse the negative externalities of climate change on each of the vertices of the triangle were presented.

The Water Strategy adopted by the Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue in 2016 was widely discussed. This Algerian-Spanish initiative, developed since 2014, aims to enhance regional actions in the Western Mediterranean under a common approach that pays special attention to climate change. In particular, this project aims to boost the implementation of sustainable water policies, to enhance cooperation among Western Mediterranean countries and improve water management in the region.

In addition to this, the PRIMA initiative was presented, which supports research and innovation in 19 Euro-Mediterranean countries in the field of water management and agro-food systems. This project aims to bring together the scientific community, civil society and the business world around projects articulated in three main areas: water management, farming systems and agro-food value chains. On this basis, consortia of at least three participants from the north and south of the Mediterranean are organised to carry out the selected projects.

Future prospects in the energy sector will depend on the proactivity of the Mediterranean countries in the next three years

When it comes to the energy sector, future prospects are bound to the proactivity of Mediterranean countries in the next few years. In this connection, the participants in the session discussed the results of a study released in April 2018 by the Mediterranean Energy Observatory (OME) on Mediterranean Energy Perspectives. The document presents two energy scenarios for 2040. The first one, called “reference scenario” based on the “business-as-usual” estimates, recalls past trends and builds its regional outlook on an assumed trend of continuity. The second one, called “proactive scenario”, foresees the implementation of energy-efficiency programmes and increased diversification of the energy mix based on the NDCs submitted by each country. Besides, this scenario assumes that international funding will be readily available.

According to the study, in a proactive scenario, energy demand would be curtailed to a maximum increase of 13% by 2040. The energy mix would remain fossil-fuel based, but the share of such fuels could be reduced from the current two-thirds of the total to just over half by 2040. In this regard, it predicts an increase in the use of natural gas and a decidedly stronger presence of renewables in the Mediterranean energy sector. Finally, in the proactive scenario, lower demand and decarbonised power generation will lead to a 4% drop in current levels of CO₂ emissions (compared with a 36% increase if current trends continue).

Recommendations

A series of suggestions and recommendations related to the technical and socio-political articulation of the triangle emerged from the conversation.

A sectoral approach appears more digestible and advisable

It also underlined the need to improve the link between food and energy security and, in general, to increase cohesion between the three sectors involved in the triangle. Several of the participants warned about the need to deepen the role of food and agriculture in the construction of a sustainable economy capable of subverting social problems such as migrations caused by adverse climatic conditions.

In this context, the socio-political level, the importance of improving education and awareness of climate change and natural resources, as well as mechanisms for transferring research results, was stressed. Indeed, it was suggested that the nexus should also be enlarged to embrace education and healthcare. Furthermore, it was stressed that purely environmental measures are difficult to implement from the political point of view unless they are accompanied by other measures to ensure that the needs of citizens, closely linked to food security, are met.

Fourth session: “Youths, Education and Employment in the Western Mediterranean: An Incomplete Transition”

The fourth session of the meeting focused again on young people to deal this time with the dynamics of employment in this segment of society and its effects on other areas of Western Mediterranean countries. In this vein, the session was opened with a special emphasis on the intricate relationship between education, employment, youth empowerment and social change. Some participants also mentioned the need to improve pathways for the inclusion of young people in society through decent work and education systems appropriate to the needs of current societies.

Labour markets in the Mediterranean are heterogeneous and insufficiently convergent

While there was agreement among all participants on the importance of these pillars, there was a lively debate on the relevance of the concept of employability. Moreover, different views emerged on the current conditions and future prospects for youths in the Western Mediterranean countries.

Employment Trends in Western Mediterranean Countries

Part of the session focused on the analysis of internal divergences identified in the structure of employment in the Western Mediterranean. In particular, the sensitivity of employment rates to changes in growth, education level, FDI or female participation were assessed. From this study it was concluded that there are important differences between the north and south of the Mediterranean basin, but also between countries of the south. More specifically, the analysis highlighted the lack of convergence between north and south in recent years and the great heterogeneity of labour markets in the south. In any case, the risks associated with this situation are nevertheless shared and the costs of remedying the latter should also be shared.

It was pointed out that unemployment in the countries on the northern shore is six times more sensitive to changes in GDP growth than in southern countries. This divergence is partly due to the slow response to changes in demand, ineffective fiscal policy or the inadequacy of technology to the development

conditions of the latter. With regard to the level of education, it was noted that in southern countries unemployment hits the most educated people hardest due to the rigidities of the public sector and the limited supply of qualified jobs in the industrial sector. In any event, the youth unemployment rate is, in both the north and south, much higher than the average unemployment rate. This was to some extent related to the effects of the 2008 crisis, to the skills mismatch, to the poor education in entrepreneurship and the lack of access to capital.

With regard to the relationship between unemployment and FDI, the session shed light on the structural differences among countries in the south. Thus, while in Tunisia there seems to be an inverse relationship (i.e. more FDI, less unemployment), in Algeria there is no clear relationship, which would be mostly due to the fact that investment tends to be directed towards the oil sector, which generates little employment.



The participants in the fourth session reflected on the challenges posed by the labour market for Mediterranean youth

Labour markets in the Mediterranean are heterogeneous and insufficiently convergent

Major Challenges

Several of the presentations focused on the challenges that make the Western Mediterranean a particularly sensitive area in terms of unemployment. In this respect, it was noted that if the events of 2011 in the region can be partly explained by an unemployment rate among youths of around 21%, it has now

reached almost 30%. In this regard, particular emphasis was placed on the challenges posed by population growth in an area where 250 million of the 308 million inhabitants were born after 1998. This means that, according to population projections for 2050, 7 million jobs would need to be created in the Arab region and 2 million in the Maghreb to maintain stability. It was explained that having a very young society is not necessarily a disadvantage if the conditions for its proper functioning are met. Otherwise, a young society could become a “demographic time bomb”. Indeed, it was pointed out that what was called a “demographic dividend” some decades ago now seems to be turning into a curse.

One of the greatest challenges arising from the current situation is that, in light of the expectations and standard of living that Mediterranean youths used to have, many young people today face a state of “waithood”: they finish their studies, but do not achieve the promised goals and remain waiting for access to adult life. This, as agreed by several participants, generates different sources of frustration that make them less inclined to respect the rules of the game.

Youth are immersed in a “state of waithood” that triggers frustration

Another major source of complexity is the restructuring of the public sector in many Western Mediterranean countries due to its exhaustion, to the pressure by international organisations to reduce it or to the impact of conflict on its legitimacy and power, as in the case of Libya. Against this background, the informal economy is proliferating as a social valve against the ineffectiveness of social policies, but also as a threat to the extent that it appears increasingly attractive to youths, women and qualified workers. Furthermore, as highlighted in one of the presentations, macroeconomic conditions and the institutional frameworks are not supportive of business development and job creation. Labour market regulations were also highlighted as a major obstacle to employment creation and more broadly a core constraint to business expansion. Similarly, it was stressed that labour policies are often implemented without any kind of follow-up, so that their performance is not assessed at all.

Finally, the point was made that the advent of the fourth industrial revolution and the current trend of digitalisation will not only compel countries to readapt their

labour markets and human capital to the new reality, but also labour market institutions and universities will have to follow the same path.

Recommendations

Among the recommendations and suggestions, various speakers addressed the need to stimulate growth to generate more employment, to enhance FDI in the modernisation of industrial sectors and technological transfers, to improve the quality of institutions and to take steps in creating a Mediterranean home market effect.

They also called for a “reinforced, accelerated, differentiated and deeper regional integration process with no artificial boundaries using a multi-dimensional comprehensive and novel infrastructure, innovation and industrial policy (underlined in a co-development strategy) and a novel education policy agenda implemented across several sectors and their nexus: transport, energy and de-carbonisation, water, digital economy, blue economy and sustainable urban development.”

Furthermore, participants also mentioned the need for strengthened cooperation on innovation, R&D, education, employment and young employability programmes, and social agenda issues (e.g. youths and women empowerment). Indeed, one of the presentations put the accent on the role that career guidance might play in helping education match employment.

As for entrepreneurship, the need to move from a macro to a micro level and to redesign training systems was mentioned, with a view to achieving a digital and innovative breakthrough. According to this same perspective, the legal and technical possibilities of entrepreneurship should also be diversified and a favourable environment created for entrepreneurship. Likewise, the need to also act on financing tools and support project leaders in a professional way was discussed.

Roundtable: “5+5 Dialogue: What Margin for a Ten-Party Reflection?”

The III Forum MedThink 5+5 was closed with a roundtable whose main objective was to allow a joint reflection on the issues addressed over the previous two days and to advance in the discussion on the role that the initiatives related to the 5+5 Dialogue should play in the complex Mediterranean framework. Therefore, the conversation began by exploring the ambivalent characteristics of this intergovernmental format, whose advantages are sometimes also part of its weaknesses. The informality, the shared interests and the absence of an institutional framework were discussed, along with the complementarity between this framework and the other multilateral formats that coexist in the Mediterranean like the Union for the Mediterranean or the Arab Maghreb Union.



The conference was closed with a round table where the place of the 5+5 Dialogue within the Mediterranean institutional frameworks was discussed

In addition to the characteristics of the format and its current fit in the Mediterranean environment, there was also room for debate on the sectoral initiatives implemented by it and for recommendations in view of the potential future scenarios of the Western Mediterranean. In this regard, the roundtable

was opened by recalling the speech of French President Macron at the Tunisian Parliament in February 2018 on reinforcing EU-Maghreb relations in the context of broader Euro-Mediterranean relations. In this respect, an overriding question was posed to the participants at the roundtable: “Is it not a good occasion to convene a new 5+5 Dialogue Summit of Heads of State and Government so that new and old challenges that we face together in the Western Mediterranean can be reframed?”

Strengths and Setbacks of the 5+5 Dialogue

Several of the speakers agreed to underline the longevity of the 5+5 Dialogue as one of the proofs of its success and the informality of this format as its essential strength. As one of the participants pointed out, the Dialogue does not impose a common position, it is a space for debate away from media pressure and designed for listening and debating. On the other hand, several speakers pointed out that its sectoral approach and its combination of multilateral and bilateral dimensions make it a malleable and effective format for dealing with certain key issues such as defence.

The longevity and informality of the 5+5 Dialogue prove its success

Thus, the great diversity of themes, discourses and formats, which have been progressively expanded in recent decades, have contributed to the consolidation of a “circular space” in the Western Mediterranean. Examples of the achievements in this area included initiatives such as the 5+5 Water Strategy, sustainable urban development, the blue economy and transport. On the other hand, several participants agreed that the geographical proximity between the countries as well as the reduced format of the Dialogue have been key elements in maintaining and improving its functioning over the years.

Similarly, the MedThink 5+5 network itself and inter-parliamentary initiatives have been highlighted as two essential elements in the articulation of the Dialogue beyond the intergovernmental sphere. In this regard, it was noted that the combination of a vertical and horizontal approach, as well as gradual progress towards concrete actions, are among the mechanisms that have

contributed to the positive evolution of this format. Nevertheless, it was pointed out several times that the success of certain initiatives like 5+5 Defence does not mean that their structure and functioning might be replicated successfully in other sectors. For these, new and creative solutions are yet to be found so that they can perform successfully.

The combination of different formats with a progressive approach towards concrete actions, have contributed to the evolution of this framework

On another note, several participants warned about the various setbacks that might weaken the performance of the Dialogue and, among them, the lack of protocols of evaluation of the initiatives to be implemented. This was the most striking difference with other regional frameworks.

Informality vs. Invisibility

Despite the advantages of the informality of the 5+5 Dialogue, several of the speakers stressed the risks that this same feature entails. Among them, the lack of an institutional framework and the extreme discretion that the initiatives in this framework maintain both at the media level and in contact with other institutions, mean that the initiative runs the risk of becoming invisible. In fact, one of the participants warned that its weight at international level remains negligible and suggested that the 5+5 Dialogue should strengthen its relations with other institutions, as it already does with the UfM and the European Commission. Better use of all the frameworks for dialogue would also contribute to greater complementarity among the different formats and to the construction of a single consensual agenda for the Western Mediterranean.

In a similar vein, the advantage of focusing on subjects of cooperation makes it possible to launch positive messages and to mobilise different sectors of society. Besides, it was noted that more visibility would also help to boost the potential of this framework to become a means to transfer good examples and best practices between southern and northern countries of the basin. Among the examples cited, particular attention was paid to innovation, inclusiveness, social entrepreneurship, financial tools with social impact or initiatives bridging civil society and private sector.

Better use of dialogue frameworks would contribute to greater complementarity

Common Interests or Common Challenges?

A further major controversy at this roundtable concerned the notion of “shared interests”. One of the participants raised the question of whether there is such a link between Western Mediterranean countries or whether these share rather common challenges. According to this speaker, if such common interests really existed, there would be no need to call for a shift from thinking to action. Thus, the heterogeneity of the member countries of the Dialogue and the variability of governmental interests over time render these interests far from common.

For other participants, however, the community of interests is evident and manifested in the smooth functioning of certain of the initiatives that the Dialogue has promoted. In a similar vein, another speaker noted that there is not only a sharing of risks but also a relationship of mutual understanding of them.

Prospects and Recommendations

With regard to future directions, several participants agreed on the importance of maintaining the informal and flexible structure of the Dialogue while enhancing its contribution to sustainable, inclusive and solidarity-based development in the Western Mediterranean. One of the speakers put forward the proposal of aspiring to the construction of a kind of G-10 Med that would act in different fields “not as an institution, but as an arbiter.”

The importance of promoting dialogue and diversity within this framework was also reiterated, as was the need to open up more spaces for youths and women within it.

According to several participants, the 5+5 Dialogue fulfils the conditions to help advance regional integration provided that it finds a balance between the needs of youths and reality, that it is capable of combating marginalisation and social exclusion and that it can implement actions against radicalisation and extremism.

Overall, the participants agreed that now more than ever it is important to continue enriching the Western Mediterranean Dialogue to promote human development, to take the successful initiatives fostered within the 5+5 Dialogue in order to face together the challenges that lie ahead of us.

