

BARCELONA EUROMED FORUM
**Social inclusion in the aftermath
of the Arab Spring: from politics to policies**

BARCELONA, 27th - 28th June 2013 PALAU CENTELLES

Program



Project funded
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Social inclusion in the aftermath of the Arab Spring: from politics to policies

Whether reaching government through revolutions or reforms, newly democratically elected governments have to face huge economic and social challenges in the short term. The situations differ from country to country but there is a sense of urgency to introduce macro-economic reforms as the balance of payments is deteriorating rapidly in most of them. Governments and international financial institutions are trying to agree on the terms and conditions of financial packages to ensure economic stability that will lay the foundations for a sustainable and inclusive growth.

However important it is now to focus on maintaining economic stability, it is essential not to lose sight of the more fundamental medium and long-term social and economic challenges. Indeed, pressure from the various social stakeholders is mounting, with demands for more and better jobs, better living conditions and universal access to quality social services since Mediterranean countries in transition suffer from higher unemployment and lower growth rates as economic growth is slowed by the uncertainties of the political agenda. Specifically, widening income gaps, the perception in public opinion of increasing social injustices, widespread corruption and years of non-inclusive growth coupled with the lack of freedom are often cited as the more important causes of the uprisings that led to the changes and transformations in many countries of the Arab world from 2011. Therefore, it seems increasingly evident that a democratic transition in the Arab Mediterranean countries without an agenda of social cohesion and inclusive economic growth will not be sustainable.

The good news is that the transformations in the Mediterranean offer a historic opportunity for the Arab countries in transition to modernise not only their political but also their economic and social systems. A democratic and open debate is now possible on issues such as the case for social protection, the importance of social dialogue during transitions, the need for labour market reforms and how to fight against corruption and promote transparency.

These are the subjects that will be discussed during the conference "Social inclusion in the aftermath of the Arab Spring: from politics to policies". Beyond the rhetoric of the political debate, governments, irrespective of their political orientation, will have to confront important social policy choices in areas in which Europe can boast long experience in policy formulation, negotiation and implementation.

¹ This activity is part of the programme "Promoting Mutual Awareness, Understanding and Cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the European Neighbourhood Region (South)" (EuropeAid/125411/ACT/CMulti-Lot3) co-funded by the European Union through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) regional track.

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Thursday 27th June

9.30 am – 10.00 am **Accreditations**

10 am – 11 am **Welcome & Inaugural plenary session**

Andreu Bassols, Director General, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Spain
Ibrahim Saif, Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan
Salahddine Mezouar, Former Minister of Economy and Finance and President of RNI Party, Morocco
Lluís Mosella, Advisor to the Catalan Finance Minister of Economy and Knowledge, Generalitat de Catalunya, Spain
Senén Florensa, President of the Delegate Committee of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Spain

11 am – 11.30 am **Coffee break**

11.30 am – 12.30 pm **First session**

The case for social protection and inclusive growth in the Mediterranean countries

The Arab Spring brought the need for social inclusion and a new social contract to the forefront. Transitions are defining moments for social welfare systems where key questions are discussed. What kind of policies should be put in place to reduce poverty? How can the impact of these policies be assessed to improve them? What are the minimum social safety nets to be implemented in a context of crisis and scarcity? How can revenues be increased for the state to implement social policies through broadening the tax base? Is there fiscal space for financing the Arab development transformation?

Chair / Moderator

Hanan Morsy, Senior Regional Economist in charge of the Southern Mediterranean Region, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Speakers

Ibrahim Saif, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan
Güven Sak, Managing Director, Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey, TEPAV
Mohamed Ahmed Maait, Deputy Chairman of the Egyptian Financial Supervisory Authority, Egypt
Latifa Elabida, Tayssir Program, former Secretary of State, Morocco

First comments

Javier Albarracín, Director, Socioeconomic Development Department, IEMed, Spain
Khalid Sekkat, Professor of Economics, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

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12.30 pm – 1.30 pm **Debate**

1.30 pm – 3.30 pm **Lunch**

3.30 pm – 4.30 pm **Second session**

Social dialogue in political transitions

After two years of changes in the Arab Mediterranean, countries are facing difficult socioeconomic situations. Inflation rates remain high, wages are stagnated and unemployment continues to be a crucial question in social dialogue. In Tunisia, for example, the UGTT is facing a difficult dialogue with political parties such as Al-Nahda. Similarly, despite the major achievements of unions in Egypt (where there are about 1,200) the new government is experiencing difficult relations with them. In this respect, the new socioeconomic and political context of the Mediterranean countries poses new questions to social dialogue such as: What is the role of the trade unions in these countries? How can the unions' autonomy be constructed and guaranteed? What are the real modifications in the legal framework that guarantee the unions' freedoms? And, finally, what are the necessary economic reforms in order to generate economic growth and employment? An inclusive and non-binding dialogue between the government, unions and trade associations should be established.

Chair / Moderator

Boutheina Gribaa, Project Coordinator at the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), Tunis

Speakers

Alaa Ezz, Secretary General, Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations, (CEEBA), Egypt, and Coordinator Businessmed

Belgacem Ayari, Deputy Secretary General in charge of the Private Sector, Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), Tunisia

Pablo de Zavala Saro, General Director, Fundación Transición Española, Spain

First comments

Montserrat Mir, International and Development Secretariat, CCOO, Spain

Peter Seideneck, Advisor for the Mediterranean at the European Trade Union Confederation (CES), Belgium

4.30 pm – 5.30 pm **Debate**

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Friday 28th June

9.00 am – 10.00 am

Third session

The ever difficult labour market reforms

Unlocking the potential for job creation while ensuring labour rights is one of the most pressing challenges facing the MENA region. Countries in the region suffer from high unemployment, which mostly affects the young, the educated and women. Structural transformation towards higher productivity and the creation of qualified jobs requires far reaching reforms in multiple sectors. It is now necessary to offer specific ways of putting wealth redistribution and employment policies on the employment agenda. The new growth model would preferably have to leverage public-private partnerships to enhance workfare.

Chair / Moderator

Becker Torbjörn, Director, Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE), Sweden

Speakers

Amal Reghay, Director in charge of Employment, Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, Morocco

Vincent Castel, Principal Program Coordinator, Regional Department for North Africa, African Development Bank

Gisela Nauk, Chief of the Social Policy Section, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Jamal Belahrach, Chairman of the Committee on Employment and Social Relations, CGEM, Morocco

First comments

Yousef Qaryouti, Director of Decent Work Team (DWT), Cairo Office for North Africa, ILO

Gita Subrahmanyam, Research Associate at the LSE Public Policy Group, London, and Senior Adviser, African Development Bank

10.00 am – 11 am

Debate

11 am – 11.30 am

Coffee break

11.30 am – 12.30 pm

Fourth session

Public Administration: improving transparency and accountability

Transformations in the Mediterranean offer an historic opportunity for the Arab countries. The democratisation process is facing several challenges and the political institutions need to reform their administrative structure. Good governance and anti-corruption policies should address all governmental institutions and society with the aim of creating a new culture of transparency. It is

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indispensable to create independent bodies and reinforce the internal accountability of state institutions. Furthermore, civil society is emerging as a growing actor that can and should play an active role in holding the state accountable. Moreover, public service vocational training and staff professionalization should be implemented.

President / Moderator

Joaquim Llimona, Director of International Affairs and Cooperation at Barcelona City Council

Speakers

Ghada Moussa, Secretary General of Transparency and Integrity Committee, Ministry of Administrative Development, Egypt

Geoff Prewitt, Deputy of the UNDP's Regional Centre for Arab States, Egypt

Khaled Ladhari, Director of the General Control of Public Departments (CGSP), Tunisia

First comments

Lamia Moubayed Bissat, Director, Basil Fuleihan Institute of Finance, Lebanon

Kinda Hattar, Regional Coordinator for Maghreb, Transparency International, Germany

12.30 pm – 1.30 pm

Debate

1.30 pm – 2.30 pm

Conclusions

Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)

Andreu Bassols, Director General, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), Spain

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