

The Involvement of the Mediterranean Countries

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Key words:

ABSTRACT

The Barcelona process of 1995 tended to draw our attention to the strategic importance of the Mediterranean area and to promote the common interests of the countries involved, interests such as trade and investments but also protection of the environment, resources of energy, and the maintenance of peace and stability in the region.

The Euromediterranean partnership consists of a multilateral system based on a network of bilateral relationships between the Mediterranean partner countries and the European Union.

The process not only aims at improving coordination, but also at guaranteeing the synergies between the various existing activities. In order to consolidate the Euromediterranean relationship it is necessary to stimulate the partnership and boost its instruments.

On the occasion of the Feira Meeting (19–20 June, 2000) the general strategy of the European Union towards the Mediterranean focusing on three pillars was approved:

- the creation of an area of peace and stability based on the respect for human rights and democratic principles
- the progressive increase of free trade between the Mediterranean countries and the European Union and between the singular members
- major comprehension and awareness of the cultural differences of the Mediterranean countries

Trading with the European Union is substantial: Europe not only absorbs some 51% of Mediterranean exports, it also supplies 53% of Mediterranean imports.

The productive base of the Mediterranean has been found to be inadequate, foreign investments are insufficient.

The main problem, however, remains the incomplete peace process and the ensuing impossibility to proceed.

In some cases local governments have failed to support the initiatives of the European Union, South – South trading is still at a very early stage, and the implementation of the MEDA programme is impeded by bureaucracy and the slowness of procedures, sometimes, however, also by the incapacity of the countries involved.

The experience with the partnership system shows that for the future it is vital to concentrate all the efforts on a number of short-term and medium-term objectives, such as:

- political dialogue and establishment of free trade with the European Union
- financial co-operation
- MEDA programme (financial support in order to attain the objectives agreed upon by the association)
- commitment to peace and stability

Starting from this last and crucial point, concrete effort has to be guaranteed since it is in the very interest of everybody in order to develop the South shore of the Mediterranean.

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