

The EU and the Mediterranean Region

Anna Molnár

Introduction

In 2017, more than twenty years after the launch of the Barcelona Process, it is obvious that European stability cannot be separated from regional security, political stability, and sustainable economic development of the Mediterranean area. Europe is under the pressure due to migration crises in the Mediterranean area, and fragile and quasi-failing states (Syria, Libya) and even religious extremism (SISIS) have posed serious challenges for the EU foreign policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that after the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2015, there has been a greater emphasis on stability in the relations between the EU and its neighbours.

The Mediterranean region (cradle of modern civilization) is composed of 22 countries around the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea, and covers portions of three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. The aim of the Euro–Mediterranean cooperation was to connect the Northern and Southern shores on the Mediterranean Sea. In our days the coastal part of West Balkans also belongs to the Mediterranean. It is the consequence of specific historical events that the countries located on the Adriatic shores and belonging to the Mediterranean, originally were not part of the cooperation. Due to the fact that at the time of the establishment of the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership these countries were part of the still existing Yugoslavia, where one war followed the other and the state was literally disintegrating, joining the process was not a realistic option.

The European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) started in 1995 with the launch of the Barcelona Process “to create an area of peace, stability, security and shared economic prosperity, with full respect of democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, while promoting mutual understanding between cultures and civilisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region.” (Barcelona Declaration 1995) Despite its success in several cases, the EU and the Partner Countries now face a worsening situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and the Eurocentric approach of this partnership is debated by external and internal actors. (HUBER–PACIELLO 2016)

Following the end of the bipolar world, the EU developed the ambitious goal of becoming a real “player” in the MENA region. Although the United States dominated the so-called “Enlarged Mediterranean” or the “Greater Middle East”, new threats and challenges to international security and stability (e.g. international terrorism and radicalisation) made it clear that the Mediterranean policy of the EU needed rethinking. After the end of the bipolar international system, firstly in a unipolar, and then, since the end of the millennium, in an

even more complicated and constantly changing multi-polar international system, the role of the Mediterranean has been increasing again and again. (EHTESHAM–MOHAMMADI 2017)

In my paper firstly I describe the historical background of the relations between the Mediterranean region and the EU. Secondly in order to carry out my analysis I give a brief introduction to the development of the Euro–Med relations. After describing the contemporary institutional relations and the budget and financial tools, finally I analyse the results and challenges of the cooperation.

Historical Background

The EU member states have been linked to the countries of the Southern Mediterranean for centuries. Although this region has similar characteristics and common historical background, the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean Region are characterized by contradictions: secular versus religious, democracy versus authoritarian regime, rich versus poor, high level of industrialisation versus low level of industrialization, integrated versus disintegrated region, eldering population versus young population. On the other hand, there are strong interdependencies on several issues (energy, migration, economy) between the two parts.

The relationship between the EC–EU and the Mediterranean region goes back to the period of the bipolar system. Until the 1990s the EC created four types of relations with the Mediterranean states: firstly, preferential trade agreements (1969 with Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia; 1975 with Israel); secondly, association agreements; thirdly, cooperation agreements; and fourthly, accession agreements. The association agreements, for European countries, meant preparation for accession (e.g. Greece in 1962, Turkey 1963), while the cooperation agreements for non-European countries provided trade preferences (e.g. Morocco in 1976). Within the framework of the Global Mediterranean Policy (PMG) launched in 1972, the European Community (EC) negotiated bilateral trade and co-operation agreements with Southern Mediterranean countries (with the exception of Libya) to strengthen commercial, economic, financial and social cooperation.¹ During the process of the Southern enlargement in the 1980s, accession agreements came into force with the European Mediterranean countries (Greece in 1981, Spain in 1986).

In June 1990, the European Commission proposed a new Mediterranean policy for the Period 1992–1996. This new strategy, known as the Renovated Mediterranean Policy (RMP), increased the budget for financial co-operation with the Mediterranean region on the initiative of the Southern European countries. (MOLNÁR–SÍPOSS 2011) In Rome in December 1990 a sub-regional cooperation was decided on, following the French recommendation. The planned cooperation was to connect the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The “4 + 5” Group was created by four countries of the European Community (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain) and the five countries of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); subsequently the group developed into “5 + 5” with the accession of Malta.²

¹ Euro–Mediterranean cooperation (historical). Source: <http://www.medea.be/en/themes/euro-mediterranean-cooperation/euro-mediterranean-cooperation-historical> (Accessed: 30.01.2018)

² Created in 1989 by Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia with the aim of promoting the process of integration among the countries of the Great Maghreb.

The initial success of this cooperation was limited due to its mainly economic objectives. Following the Gulf War, the Algerian crisis and the “Lockerbie” case of Libya the initiative lost its buoyancy. (MOLNÁR 2011, 70.)

In 1990, during the Italian Presidency of the Council, the Italian Foreign Minister, Gianni De Michelis, supported by Spain, unsuccessfully proposed the creation of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean region (CSCM), following the example of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). (CARNOVALE 1995, 226.) The idea was to create a structured cooperation on the basis of comprehensive security approach of the three-pillar system of the CSCE. (DE PERINI 2018) Despite the failure of the CSCM proposal, the RMP eventually led to the creation of the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). In 1995, during the Barcelona Euro–Mediterranean ministerial meeting, representatives of fifteen EU member states and eleven Mediterranean countries, together with Palestine authorities, signed the so-called Barcelona Declaration. This document is divided into chapters on the political and security, economic, and socio-cultural “baskets” of the partnership. These three key areas, following the successful model of the OSCE, the Barcelona Declaration thus intended to create a zone of peace, stability, security, shared prosperity and deepen the dialogue between the cultures of the Mediterranean area. (BIN 1997, 3; MOLNÁR 2011, 70.)

The Barcelona Declaration renewed relations in several ways. It was, for example, the first time that cultural dialogue received an important role. Thus, the EU recognized as its equal partners the countries situated on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, treating them not merely as a market for European products, energy providing centres, or migration resources. It also played an important role in strengthening civil society and facilitating dialogue and partnership, and deepening cooperation. In launching the Barcelona process, the EU chose to apply soft power in hopes that the fundamental values of the European Union would take root in the partner states with the consideration of the local characteristics.

The importance of the Southern region declined during the Eastern enlargement that took place in the 2000s, as the EU rethought its financial and institutional framework. Among the twelve new member states there were only three Mediterranean countries (Cyprus, Malta, and Slovenia), and having new borders to the East the Southern region provisionally lost its strategic importance. After publishing the Strategy Paper on the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, the conception of a Wider Europe gave a new definition to the EU’s outlook; European neighbourhood relations: as relations with the Mediterranean countries were placed on a political level similar to the relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbours. (European Commission 2004) Following the so called “big bang” enlargement in 2004, the ENP hoped to create a “Ring of Friends” around the EU by strengthening bilateral relations with the partner countries.

In 2005, the “Year of the Mediterranean”, the Barcelona Summit reinforced the EMP, adding migration as a fourth key area. The EMP continued as the multilateral forum for dialogue and cooperation, while the ENP guaranteed bilateral relations through association agreements and actions plans with the partner countries. Since the 1990s the EU has signed new types of association agreement with the Southern Mediterranean countries (with the exception of Syria and Libya) after 1999. Today one of the main goals of these agreements has been to create a deep Euro–Mediterranean free trade area. The bilateral

relations reinforced by the Action Plans³ were complemented by the multilateral partnership of the Barcelona Process. (The Euro–Mediterranean Free Trade 2010)

In February 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy, then French Minister of Internal Affairs, proposed the establishment of a Mediterranean Union connecting the seven Mediterranean EU countries and the non-EU member states on the shores with a kind of reinforced integration and cooperation. In December 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel criticized the idea, claiming it risked splitting the EU. Merkel argued that “cooperation between some member states has to be also open to the rest and it has to be approved by all member states. [...] It cannot be that some countries establish a Mediterranean Union and fund this with money from EU coffers”. (MAHONY 2007) Merkel highlighted the importance of the equilibrium between the Southern and Eastern dimensions of the European neighbourhood policy. (HORVÁTH 2008)

As a compromise, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was established without a separate budget in 2008, when France held the presidency of the EU. The union was significantly weaker than the French proposal and, the six main areas of the UfM (the environment and water, transport and urban development, business development, energy, higher education and research, and civil protection) emphasized the economic aspects of relations. (MOLNÁR 2011; Euro–Mediterranean Partnership) Thanks to these compromises, the EMP was re-launched by the partner states with the aim of giving new vitality to the partnership. At the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008, EU member states and their Mediterranean partners (representatives of 43 countries) decided to construct *The Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean* on the basis of the Barcelona Declaration. (Joint Declaration 2008) The Barcelona Process remained the predecessor of the Union for the Mediterranean. In November 2008, the Marseille meeting of the Euro–Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs introduced a new institutional structure including the co-presidency representing the EU and the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

Although the failure of the EMP has never been declared officially, its relaunch in 2005 and the creation of the UfM in 2008 implied it. The success of the EMP, and of modernisation and democratisation, depends not only on the EU, but also on the political will and capacity of the neighbouring countries taking part in the process. National ownership has an unquestionable role.

Development of the Euro–Med Relations

Today the EMP, in the framework of the UfM, comprises all twenty-eight member states of the European Union and fifteen partner states across the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East.⁴ Members face common problems, such as maritime pollution and

³ The Action Plans are political documents on the agenda, objectives and priorities for future relations, contains the following key areas: 1. political dialogue and reform; 2. economic and social cooperation and development; 3. trade related issues, market and regulatory reform; 4. cooperation on justice, liberty and security; 5. sectoral issues including transport, energy, information society, environment, research and development; 6. the human dimension covering people-to-people contacts, civil society, education and public health.

⁴ Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Palestinian territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

maritime safety, energy or higher education issues and business development. (Union for the Mediterranean 2017a)

Since the late 1990s, the Euromed Association Agreements between the EU and the Mediterranean partner states (MPS) provide the basis for bilateral relations, while on the institutional level the former three pillars of the Barcelona Process have been filled up by the multi-lateral forums of the Euro–Med dialogue.

The European Union concluded seven Euro–Med association agreements between 1998 and 2011. These agreements set out a framework for North-South political dialogue. They also promoted the gradual liberalisation of trade in the Mediterranean area. Negotiations to deepen these association agreements through the establishment of deep and comprehensive free trade areas and further liberalisation of trade continue today. (Euro–Mediterranean Partnership s. a.a)

In December 2008, Syria and the EU started negotiations on an association agreement. In May 2011, following the events of the Arab Spring, the EU decided it would not “take further steps with regard to the association agreement with Syria and, therefore, the signing of the agreement is not on the agenda.” (European Council 2011) Following the deterioration of the security environment, negotiations for a framework agreement between the European Union and Libya halted as well. Libya remains outside the ENP, but could join financial support programs, like the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument ENPI. Libya enjoys observer status in the UfM. (Euro–Mediterranean Partnership s. a.a)

Table 1.

Euro–Mediterranean Association Agreements

Partner	End of negotiations	Date of signature	Entry into force
Tunisia	June 1995	June 1995	March 1998
Israel	September 1995	November 1995	June 2000
Morocco	November 1995	February 1996	March 2000
Palestine	December 1995	February 1997	July 1997
Jordan	April 1997	November 1997	May 2002
Egypt	June 1999	June 2001	June 2004
Algeria	December 2001	April 2002	September 2005
Lebanon	January 2002	May 2002	April 2006
Syria	currently suspended	—	—
Libya	currently suspended	—	—
Mauritania	—	—	—

Source: Euro–Mediterranean Partnership s. a.a

The Euro–Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) has developed over the past decades bringing about a new regional approach that formed the basis of creating the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and later the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Nowadays the EU’s Mediterranean policy is based on the framework of these two institutionalized programs which are formally connected. The mainly multilateral framework is supported by the UfM created in 2008 on the basis of the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership launched in 1995 by the Barcelona Declaration, while the European Neighbourhood Policy created in

2004 provides a primarily bilateral form of cooperation based on association agreements and Action Plans; the UfM complements the ENP. We have to emphasise that ENP, having two dimensions, was based on two “polices”: the Eastern and the Mediterranean Partnership.

The geographic extent of the UfM is larger than the Southern dimension of the ENP. The UfM contains not only the member states of the EU and the Southern Mediterranean partners of the ENP, but also Turkey, Mauritania, and the Balkan countries situated on the Adriatic Sea. When the EMP was created, Yugoslavia was “disintegrating” and participation in the Partnership was not an option. The EU later signed stabilization and association agreements with these Western Balkan countries to prepare them for the EU accession and to advance regional cooperation. (MOLNÁR 2011, 73.)

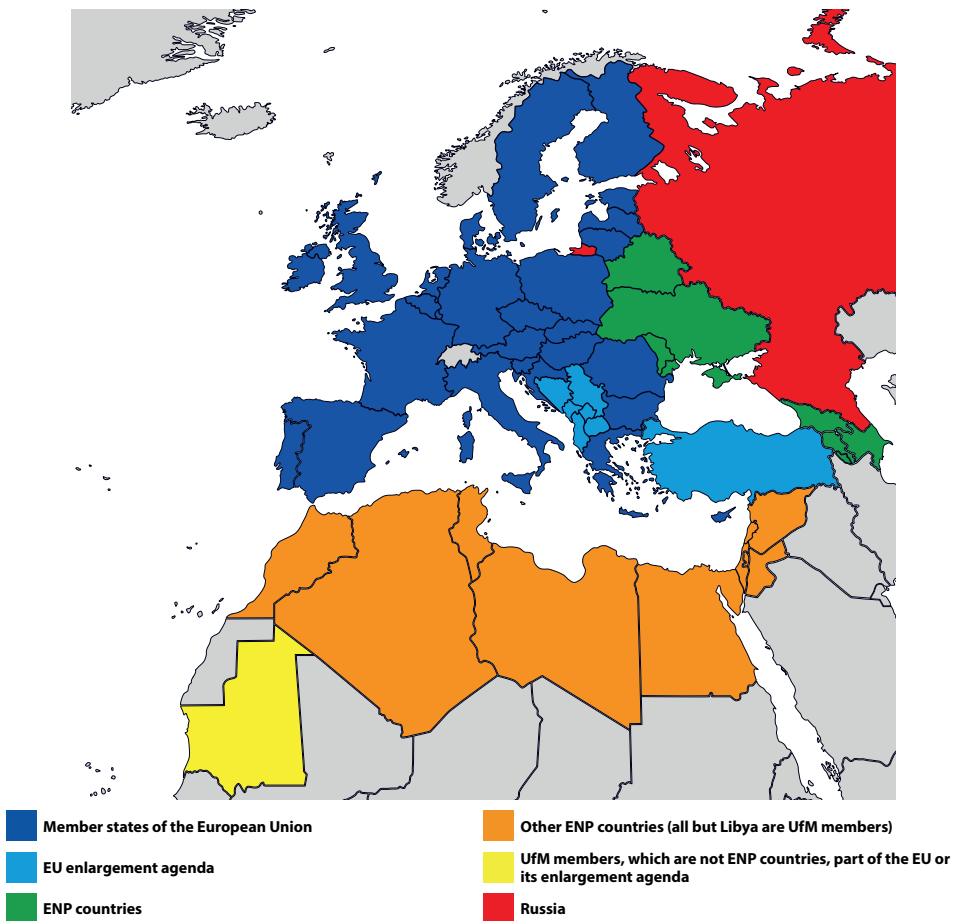


Figure 1.

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)

Source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Neighbourhood_Policy

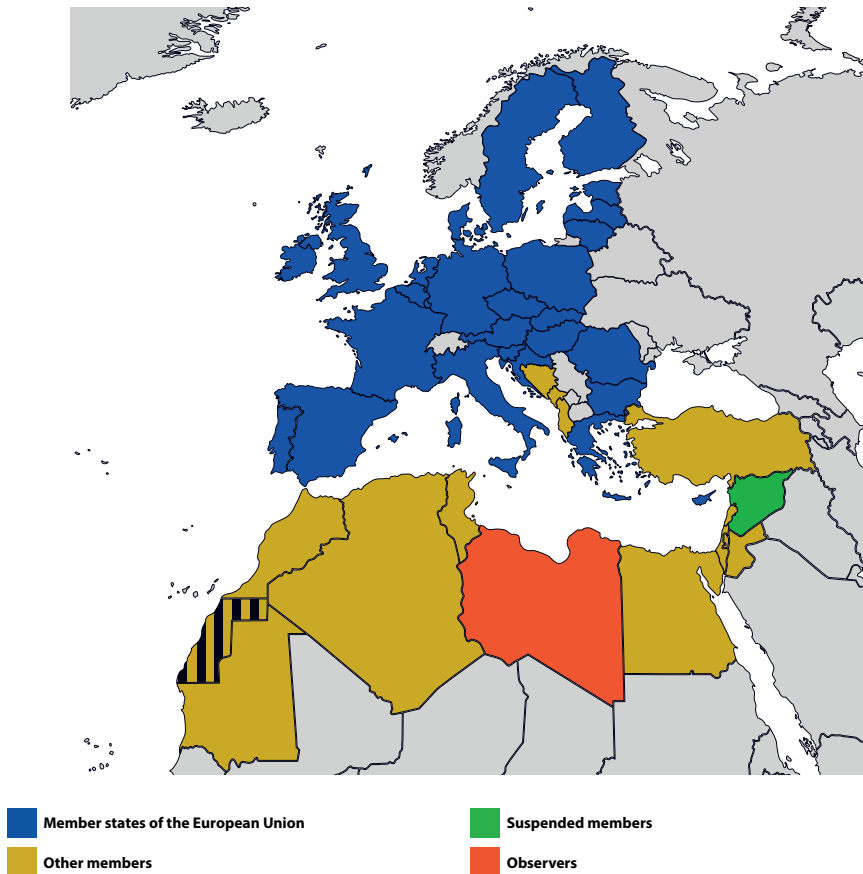


Figure 2.

Union for the Mediterranean member states

Source: Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_for_the_Mediterranean

Holding out real prospects of EU membership allows the EU to influence its partner countries. In such cases there are fewer conflicts of interests between the economic or security interests of the EU and its member states, and its partners appear more determined to launch reforms and fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. In cases of the Northern and Eastern countries (Greece, Spain, the Western Balkans), the EU played a much more effective role in the process of reform (effective Europeanisation). (FEATHERSTONE–RADAELLI 2003) For the countries of the Southern Mediterranean Basin, however, which lacked any real chance to join, the EU leadership has been less successful, coupled with scarce funding opportunities; with different socio-economic and political development of these SMP countries, the EU has not been able to fulfil a major incentive role for the implementation of real political and economic reforms. The European Union and its member states serve, in a limited way, as models of modernization for the region, but this is sometimes still overshadowed by distrust from the colonial past.

The Mediterranean policy of the EU (and its MSs) can be understood in the framework of three aspects in which the goals laid down in the Treaties and the practice are oscillating between several extremes: 1. normative/liberal and realist approaches; 2. political, cultural or legal values vs. economic and security reasons; and 3. policies supporting bottom-up or top-down development. The combinations differ depending on the security environment of the region and the political will of European governments. Regional policies using multilateral or bilateral frameworks augment EU efforts. (MOLNÁR 2016)

One of the novelties of the UfM was the concept of co-ownership. Although the UfM provides a multilateral framework for the Southern dimension of the ENP, it is a separate international organisation, and it has more members than the ENP. As a direct continuation of the Barcelona Process (EMP), it is inspired by the goals defined in the Barcelona Declaration. Until the events of the Arab Spring, however, the EMP and the UfM had little impact on the economic development and democratisation processes of the Southern neighbours whose development model differs from the European one. The persistent Arab–Israeli conflict and the events of the Arab Spring, as well as weak initial economic results and some bureaucratic arguments about the institutional structure of the UfM weakened cooperation and inspired scepticism among the Southern Mediterranean partners.

After the events of the Arab Spring it was clear the ENP and the UfM had to be rethought and changed fundamentally. The structure and the working method of the UfM were established subsequently. The EU recognised its limited role in the region, as highlighted by a report of the European Parliament:

“The Arab Spring has had the effect of a wake-up call for the EU. It illustrated the limitations of the ‘stability versus human rights’ paradigm and prompted a fundamental rethinking of EU policies. Double standards in the past have undermined the EU’s credibility in the Arab world and have created a mistrust of its intentions. In response to the Arab Spring, the EU has promised to shift away from ‘business as usual’ to ensure that support for human rights and democracy will be central to its cooperation in its Southern neighbourhood. Enabling civil society to function, to advocate for citizens’ priorities and rights and to hold governments and donors to account, is an essential part of supporting reforms that build sustainable democracy. Positive and negative incentives will also have to be applied as appropriate, and benchmarks developed to assess progress in human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” (European Parliament 2012, 5.)

The ENP was under review and, in 2011, a consensus emerged that the renewed policy must concentrate more on issues related to good governance and respect for human rights. A new incentive approach based on the principles of differentiation was elaborated. The so-called 3M (Money, Markets, and Mobility) of Catherine Ashton, former EEAS HR, was introduced in the framework of the ENP. (ASHTON 2011) These connected democratic reforms with financial support: the country that has more results in the democratic reform progress receives more financial aid, more possible mobility of legal migration, and more access to the European market.

In 2011, despite the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU was unprepared to face the challenges created by the Arab Spring. The financial and sovereign debt crisis hit several EU MSs and decreased the effectiveness of EU

crisis management capacities. The EU MSs responded slowly and in a contradictory fashion to the 2011 crisis in the MENA region. Opinion held that the then-existing authoritarian regimes could not guarantee regional stability and security in the long-term, and democratisation processes were highlighted. The emerging security challenges forced a rethinking of the conceptual framework of the ENP, as well. The European Commission (EC) subsequently reshaped the ENP, proposing a different approach for each country, and the EU decided to offer “more for more”. The new approach emphasised sustainable democracy through the 3M incentives.

European politicians initially were optimistic about the democratisation processes in the MENA region, and about the EU’s role as an external promoter of democracy. The EU institutions firmly stood by the need to support the transition to democracy. This was manifested in several documents and statements, but the question remained: were the EU and the MSs really ready and able to support these ambitious objectives? European politicians sometimes oversimplified these processes, making simplistic analogies between the 1989 Central and Eastern European changes and the Arab Spring. (ROMPUY 2012)

Political events in Egypt (2013), along with the migration and refugee crisis caused by military conflicts and fragile states (e.g. Syria and Libya), highlighted the issue of security again. In March 2015, the European Commission and the European External Action Service initiated a public consultation with governments, academia, and civil society organisations, both within the EU and in the ENP partner countries, to realise the extensive review of the ENP. Following the consultation period, the revision of the ENP was finalised in 2015. (Joint Communication 2015) EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn stated that: “New challenges, from violent conflicts in our neighbourhood to uncontrolled migration, from organized crime and terrorism to energy stoppages, all demand a robust European answer. We have to become smarter at exporting stability. If not, Europe will keep importing instability. As one observer has remarked, the “ring of friends” the EU originally aimed for, has become a “ring of fire”.” (HAHN 2015)

On 18 November 2015, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European Commission presented the main lines of the review of the ENP, which offered “more tailor-made, more differentiated partnerships between the EU and each of its neighbouring partners to reflect different ambitions, abilities and interests”. (Joint Communication 2015, 4.) The review emphasised that greater mutual ownership and joint responsibility of the partners is more successful in supporting reforms than the EU’s approach based on the “more for more” principle:

“The incentive-based approach (“More for More”) has been successful in supporting reforms in the fields of good governance, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, where there is a commitment by partners to such reforms. However, it has not proven a sufficiently strong incentive to create a commitment to reform, where there is not the political will.” (Joint Communication 2015, 5.)

Although the ENP has been trying to encourage reforms recognising the specific features of each country, in general it has not had enough time to show real results in most cases; Tunisia is an exception.

In 2015, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini, turning away from the Eurocentric approach of the previous Mediterranean policy, argued that:

“We should switch from the idea that the European Union is at the centre, surrounded by the neighbouring countries, to the idea of a new partnership based on cooperation. A stronger partnership with our neighbours is key for the European Union, while we face many challenges within our borders and beyond. We are confronted with threats that are global and have to be tackled by the international community in a united way. We have to build together a safer environment, try to solve the many crises of our common region, support the development and the growth of the poorest areas, and address the root causes of migration.” (ENP Review 2015)

Mogherini singled out five pillars of the work: “First, focus on economic development and job creation; second, cooperation on energy; third, security; fourth, migration; fifth, neighbours of the neighbours” to “strengthen together the resilience of our and our partners’ societies, and our ability to effectively work together on our common purposes.” (ENP Review 2015) This meant, again, an emphasis on the economic and security aspects of this policy framework that would lead to a “more than partnership, less than membership relation”, but without a new security strategy the real strategic framework was still unclear.

In preparation for the new security strategy of the EU, and parallel with the review of the ENP, in December 2013, the European Council gave a mandate to the High Representative, in close co-operation with the European Commission, to “assess the impact of changes in the global environment, and to report to the Council in the course of 2015 on the challenges and opportunities arising for the Union, following consultations with the Member States”. (European Council 2013) The report on the strategic review was presented to the European Council in June 2015. *The European Union in a Changing Global Environment, A More Connected, Contested and Complex World* warns that: “the EU’s ‘soft power’ is waning as the memory of the ‘big bang’ enlargement recedes and other actors strive for influence in its neighbourhood. Today’s challenge is to revive the reform momentum through credible policies of integration and association.” (MISSIROLI 2016, 139.)

During this time, the structure of the UfM was also rethought. With the accession of the Central and East European member states and the creation of the UfM, the EMP expanded to include twenty-eight EU member states and fifteen Mediterranean countries. Since the creation of the UfM, cooperation has gone through three phases. Between 2008 and 2011, under the co-presidency of France and Egypt, cooperation in the framework of the UfM was launched, and the Secretariat of the UfM in Barcelona was set up. Between 2012 and 2015, under the co-presidency of the European Union and Jordan, the capacities of the Secretariat were reinforced, the working methods of partnerships were elaborated, and the activities of the UfM were increased, giving new momentum to Euro–Mediterranean regional cooperation. Following the revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy, meetings of foreign affairs ministers of the UfM took place in November 2015 and January 2017 in Barcelona to start a new phase of cooperation. Since 2016, considering the serious challenges in the Mediterranean region and the opportunities there, the UfM’s identity and added value was highlighted. Further consolidation of this regional cooperation has been

started to create an “enhanced common regional agenda for the Mediterranean in order to effectively and collectively address the current challenges.” (Union for the Mediterranean 2017b, 1.) The 2016 annual report of the UfM noted three priorities of regional integration (regional human development; regional stability; and regional integration) to be addressed through a “pragmatic and ambitious approach”. (Union for the Mediterranean 2017c, 6.)

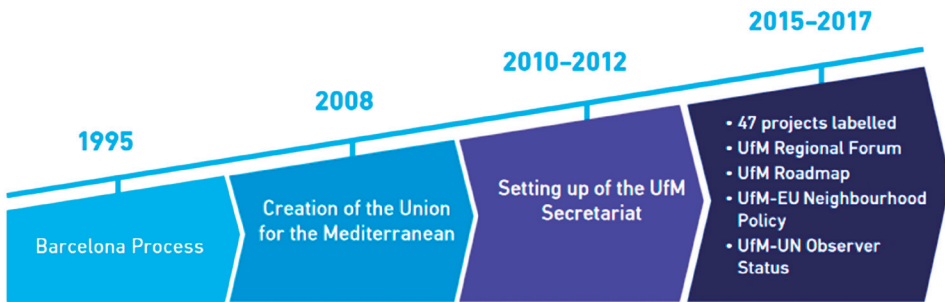


Figure 3.

Development of the Union for the Mediterranean

Source: Union for the Mediterranean 2017a, 8.

In January 2017, the ministers of foreign affairs approved a strategic document as a road map (RM) for strengthening the UfM as the expression of co-ownership in tackling the common challenges to regional stability, human development and regional integration in the Mediterranean. According to the document, forty-seven regional cooperation projects worth more than 5 billion Euros in total have been labelled under the umbrella of UfM. The document highlighted the security-development nexus yet again, stating that: “there is no development without security and no security without development.” With the adoption of the RM, the ministers of foreign affairs of the forty-three UfM countries agreed to strengthen the role of the UfM in enhancing regional cooperation and integration in the Mediterranean. The four areas for action were: 1. enhancing political dialogue amongst the member states; 2. ensuring the contribution of UfM activities to regional stability and human development; 3. strengthening regional integration; and 4. consolidating UfM capacity for action. (Union for the Mediterranean 2017b, 4.)

Contemporary Institutional Relations

The Union for the Mediterranean has a North-South co-presidency, currently exercised by the External Action Service of the EU, representing EU Member States, and Jordan, representing the Mediterranean partners. In 2012, the Council of the EU (FAC Conclusions of February 2012) decided that the High Representative assumes the Northern co-presidency when the Union for the Mediterranean takes the format of Foreign Ministers Meetings. The Commission assumes the Northern co-presidency during Ministerial Meetings that solely concern matters falling within areas of exclusive UfM competence. The EU

External Action Service leads the Senior Official Meetings of the UfM for the Northern co-presidency. (Union for the Mediterranean 2016a)

The UfM secretariat headquartered in Barcelona is in charge of identifying and promoting activities like regional projects in different sectors. The current head (Secretary General) of the Secretariat is Fathallah Sijilmassi. The Secretariat of the UfM is financed by contributions from the European Union (50%) and the partner states (50%). The activities of the Secretariat are overseen and coordinated by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) which consists of Senior Officials from the ministries of foreign affairs of the forty-three countries. This body approves the budget and work programme of the Secretariat. It is also in charge of preparing the Ministerial Meetings. It also examines project proposals, guaranteeing coherence with the guidelines derived from the Summit of Heads of State and Government, and from the Ministerial Meetings. The SOM takes decisions by consensus. (Euro–Mediterranean Partnership s. a.b; Union for the Mediterranean 2016b)

The Union for the Mediterranean has the following six priority areas: 1. business development; 2. social and civil affairs; 3. higher education and research; 4. transport and urban development; 5. water and environment; and 6. energy and climate action. The UfM has a number of key projects managed by the Secretariat: the de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea; the establishment of maritime and land highways; a joint civil protection programme on prevention, preparation, and response to natural and man-made disasters; development of alternative energy sources; the creation of Euro–Mediterranean Universities (in 2008 in Slovenia, in 2016 in Morocco); and the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, which supports small businesses. (Union for the Mediterranean 2016a)

The partnership co-operation and dialogue that was established by the Barcelona Declaration is based on several institutions and forums. The Conferences of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA) and the Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) are responsible for the discussion regarding all dimensions of the partnership. The ministerial meetings, including sectorial meetings, are also the main bodies of multilateral and regional cooperation, responsible for the economic and cultural cooperation and dialogue, as well as the all-embracing development of the partnership. Ministerial conferences have been called on different thematic fields such as water management, industry, energy, migration, tourism, cultural heritage and culture, and the environment.

Since 2004 the Euro–Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), a body for political cooperation, has become one of the most important institutions of the Barcelona Process. The first consultative parliamentary forum was organised in 1998, and it became a genuine EMPA in 2004 on the basis of the proposal of the European Parliament. The EP resolution was approved by the fifth Euro–Mediterranean Conference of Foreign Ministers (Valencia, April 2002). The EMPA held its first session in Greece in March 2004. In 2010 in Amman, the EMPA's name was changed to Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM (PA–UfM).

The main roles of this separate consultative parliamentary body of the UfM are: “enhancing the visibility and transparency of the Euro–Mediterranean Partnership and bringing its work closer to the interests and expectations of the public; [and] adding democratic legitimacy and support to regional cooperation.” (Parliamentary Assembly s. a.a) The PA–UfM, which works in close cooperation with the UfM Secretariat, holds at least one plenary session annually and has a total of 280 members, equally distributed between the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean (140–140). The PA–UfM has an

annual presidency that is held in rotation by the four members of the bureau, ensuring parity and alternation between South and North chairs. The presidency of the bureau has been held by the EP (2012–2013), Jordan (2013–2014), Portugal (2014–2015), Morocco (2015–2016) and Italy (2016–2017). (Parliamentary Assembly s. a.b) There are five standing committees within the PA–UfM: the Committee on Political Affairs, Security, and Human Rights; the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs, and Education; the Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture; the Committee on Energy, Environment, and Water; and the Committee on Women’s Rights in the Euro–Med Countries. The PA–UfM adopts non-binding resolutions or recommendations. (Parliamentary Assembly s. a.b)

To promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations within the framework of social, cultural, and human partnership, in 2005, the Anna Lindh Foundation was established in Alexandria. It has become the largest network of civil-society organisations, and its goal is to promote the inter-cultural dialogue in the Mediterranean area. It has worked from the beginning as a network of national networks, and now contains more than 4,000 member networks, including NGOs, public institutions, universities, foundations, local and regional authorities, individuals and private organisations. (Anna Lindh Foundation s. a.)

The European Neighbourhood Policy complements the UfM with bilateral relations between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries. Cooperation in the framework of the ENP builds upon several Association Agreements (AA) between the EU and the partner countries. On the basis of the AA’s bilateral Action Plans (AP), the EU and the ENP partner countries in the Southern Mediterranean region (except Libya, Syria, and Algeria) agreed to launch a political and economic reform agenda for a period of three or five years. The goals of the ENP, such as reforms to democratisation or economic integration are supported by the financial funds of the EU, mainly by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

Every year from 2015, ENP progress reports were published by the EEAS and the Commission to describe the development of reforms in the neighbouring countries. Since the review of the ENP, the progress reports have been replaced by association implementation reports that assess the state of implementation by the partner country and by the EU. These documents focus on the progress toward key reforms agreed between the two parties.

Budget and Financial Tools

Between 1994 and 2004, the main financial tool of the Barcelona Process was the MEDA Program (similar to the PHARE and TACIS programs), with additional loans available from the European Investment Bank. For the MEDA I programme (1994–1999) 3.4 billion Euros, and for the MEDA II programme (2000–2006) 5.4 billion Euros were allocated. Following the establishment of the ENP and for the programming period 2007–2013, MEDA (and TACIS) were replaced by a single financial instrument, the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI), with approximately €12 billion available. In the 2014–2020 period, the European Neighbourhood Instrument, ENI promotes the fulfilment of the ENP objectives, for which 15.4 billion Euros have been allocated.

The implementation of reforms is supported by geographic instruments, like the ENI, and by thematic instruments, like the Civil Society Facility (CSF). There are other EU instruments and programmes to promote partnership with neighbouring countries (like the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development (NSA-LA), and the Instrument for Stability (IfS). “The EIDHR is designed to help civil society become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. Building on its key strength, which is the ability to operate without the need for host government consent, the EIDHR is able to focus on sensitive political issues and innovative approaches and to cooperate directly with local civil society organisations which need to preserve independence from public authorities, providing for great flexibility and increased capacity to respond to changing circumstances.” (EIDHR s. a.) The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) provide loans, as well.

The Western Balkans and Turkey are in the pre-accession process and, as candidates and potential candidates for membership in the EU, are not covered under the EU’s neighbourhood policy. These countries therefore do not belong to the area of the ENP. In 2007, in place of all previous pre-accession programs, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) was introduced by the European Commission to help all pre-accession activities in candidate and potential candidate countries. Under the financial framework of 2014–2020, the part of the Western Balkans that belongs to the Mediterranean receives EU funding through IPA II. (MOLNÁR 2011, 73.)

The Union for the Mediterranean has no budget from which to finance its activities and projects, since it was conceived as an instrument to mobilise private funds from investment and development banks and other international bodies.

Results and Challenges

The EU, as a normative-civilian power, (MANNERS 2002) has placed great emphasis on the protection, spread, and voluntary acceptance of its principles (peace, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedoms, respect for human dignity) by third countries, particularly in the MENA region. (WHITMAN 2011, 1–25.) It is not surprising that the EU’s Mediterranean policy has been criticised by several stakeholders, like the Southern partner states, experts, and academics, as it contains contradictions between the stated policy goals and practice. (DEL SARTO–SCHUMACHER 2005; VALLELERSUNDI 2004; TOCCI–CASSARINI 2011; TOCCI 2011) According to many, the EU and its MSs, in implementing the Mediterranean Policy through a more realistic and pragmatic approach, has placed more emphasis on economic and security issues than on normative goals. While the EU kept trying to convince the partner countries of the necessity of political and economic reforms, it put up with the existence of authoritarian (but pro-Western) regimes in favour of regional stability and secure energy resources. Regimes that assisted in tackling the migration crisis also found favour. It is not surprising, therefore, that from time to time the EU and its MSs have been criticised as hypocritical. (HANSEN–MARSH 2015)

The last twenty years, and especially the Arab Spring, have shown that the lack of political will among the Southern Mediterranean partners, the low level of financial support

provided by the EU, and the different foreign policy interests of the MSs, mean that the EU's Mediterranean policy has had little impact on the democratisation and securitisation processes of the region. From time to time the EU has struggled to tackle challenges collectively (like in the case of Libya). Emerging crises posed serious security challenges to the EU. The lack of a new European security strategy hindered, until recently, the adoption of appropriate answers.

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy adopted in 2016 represents a more pragmatic approach, focusing on the state and societal resilience of the region. According to Sven Biscop, the Global Strategy signals a return to *Realpolitik*, and a balance between "dreamy idealism and unprincipled pragmatism". The GS speaks of "principled pragmatism". Compared to the previous security strategy of the EU (2003), the GS takes into account its barriers, and it is less optimistic about the success of democracy transfer. (BISCOP 2016) The priority placed on the state and societal resilience of the Southern neighbours clearly shows the turn away from the EU's normative role.

Conclusions

Despite the ambitions of 2003, namely the creation of the Ring of Friends, today a ring of instability encompasses the EU. After the Arab Spring and the crisis in Ukraine, the security situation has deteriorated dramatically. Economic and financial problems remain, the migration crisis is unresolved, and growing Euroscepticism and the Brexit threaten to hinder any effective EU response. It is clear that the review of the neighbourhood policy, a key instrument of the EU's common foreign and security policy, was accelerated by the Arab Spring. For a variety of reasons though, such as lower-than-expected available resources, the lack of a common will, and the lack of political engagement by the partner states, little substantive progress has been made.

Before the Arab Spring overturned the status quo within the MENA region, the possibility of dialogue between the partner states was considered the most important result of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It strengthened the EU's role in the region, as well. Enhancing economic and political relations and, in the long term, accelerating the economic development of the Southern Mediterranean partners were among the crucial aims of regional and bilateral forms of cooperation.

In recent years, demographic, economic, and social processes led to political instability, social unrest, and increased security risks in the Southern Mediterranean region. Until the review of the ENP in 2011, the EU's Mediterranean policy, despite the normative ambitions of the EU, essentially focused on the security aspects characterized by the pragmatic-realistic approach of the capitals, and seemingly turned a blind eye to the pro-Western authoritarian systems. Thus, instead of bottom-up processes with an uncertain end, non-democratic governments regarded as guarantees of the political stability were supported. During the Arab Spring this kind of approach was discredited in the eyes of the people, despite tangible results; therefore, it could not give truly successful responses to the challenges. The effective implementation of this policy was hindered further by the limited level of regional economic integration between Southern Mediterranean countries. Irregular migration and refugee flows in the past few years have also pointed out

that the EU's prosperity exporting efforts had not succeeded in the closest region to the EU, and the social and political problems continue to grow.

The difficulties of the multilateral Euro–Mediterranean policy have been recognized several times; when it was complemented by the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, it became obvious that instead of realising regional integration under the multilateral umbrella of the ENP–UfM, relations based on bilateral agreements were intensifying. After the Arab Spring, it became clear that the EU could not offer a new “Mediterranean Marshall Plan” to this region, despite the expectations of several stakeholders. The contradictory trends suggested that the EU's relations with this region were not strengthened by these processes. Competition between global and regional powers was intensified by the absence of a real hegemon, and the regional dynamics turned increasingly chaotic.

In the new framework of the security system of the early nineties, when the institutionalised structure of the Euro–Mediterranean relations was built, U.S. hegemony clearly prevailed in the region. The EU's evolving “soft-civilian power” was supposed to complement the hard power of the USA. During the last decades, the international system has changed dramatically, and new players with global strategic interests have emerged in the multipolar environment of the Mediterranean region.

It has become clear that the normative and soft power offered by the EU is insufficient. The EU had only a limited impact on the transition processes of the countries in the region (e.g. the strengthening of civil society). It is obvious that in the future, the EU must use both soft and hard foreign policy instruments in the framework of the comprehensive approach elaborated in 2013 and the integrated approach introduced by the Global Strategy. In 2016 Jean-Claude Juncker noted in his State of the Union speech: “Soft power is no longer enough [...] in the EU's increasingly dangerous neighbourhood.” It is not coincidental that following the review of the ENP, supporting stabilisation became a top priority. (Joint Communication 2015)

The EU has a long history of ambitions but in reality provided unsuccessful and insufficient plans for the Mediterranean region. It is not surprising that the Global Strategy (GS) adopted in 2016 is trying to find a perfect balance between idealism and sometimes inconvenient reality has introduced the approach of “principled pragmatism”. (European External Action Service 2016)

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