



by Flavia Giovannelli

The 10th Anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration in the youth field

The Barcelona Process (1995) was the result of the political will of originally 27 partners countries^I to provide a framework for strengthened dialogue and comprehensive cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

With a specific emphasis on youth, the Barcelona Process stressed that “youth exchanges should be the means to prepare future generations for a closer cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean partners. A Euro-Mediterranean youth exchange cooperation programme should therefore be established based on experience acquired in Europe and taking account of the partners’ needs”.^{II}

The great importance of the Euro-Med Youth programme

By reading the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme Mid-Term Evaluation Report^{III} or simply by listening to young people from the so-called “Meda countries”, we can easily

notice that before the launching of the Euro-Med Youth programme those countries had no opportunities to develop youth activities with European counterparts. There were simply no programmes dealing with non-formal education or financing projects, exchanges and youth activities in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

The Euro-Med Youth programme can thus be considered as a milestone, a necessary step for the creation of what some have called a “EuroMed Youth space”.

To the question: “**Why choose EuroMed?**” Nadia, an Egyptian freelance trainer stated that “It is the only available option where we live” and Jalel, a youth worker from Tunisia affirmed that “to transcend geographical and cultural borders...EuroMed is the only possibility..”.^{IV}



For a great deal of Meda youth structures the Euro-Med Youth programme has been the only source of support for international activities mainly Europe-oriented. Thanks to the relative simplicity of its functioning mechanism and to the multitude of supporting activities undertaken by the Salto Youth EuroMed Resource Centre, the EuroMed Youth Platform^V and the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, many young people from Meda countries benefited as never before from training and meeting events, youth activities, sharing youth practice with European peers/partners.

While European youth structures can simply apply for specific geographical areas in order to run their activities (South Eastern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, overseas countries), Meda ones have only this access to youth mobility.

Once again the question, “**Why choose Euromed?**” posed to some European participants showed other perspectives. A Spanish participant, Ares, said: “there is a strong Mediterranean identity in Spain” while Vito from Italy added: “there are a lot of Tunisians and Moroccans in my region, with cultures so different from mine. From a more European point of view, the EuroMed youth programme seems to be considered more as a vehicle to deliver more understanding towards other cultures and/or a factor providing more familiarity among people from different origins”.

Whatever reason our participants expressed, the successful impact of the Euro-Med Youth programme on young people’s lives and activities, both in Meda and European countries, has been largely proved.

● **The Salto Youth EuroMed Resource Centre...and its own celebrations**

The Salto Youth EuroMed Resource Centre (based in France) aims to promote and develop a global training strategy for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the youth field. (I am currently working there as project officer).

Keeping in mind the aforementioned considerations about the fundamental role played by the EuroMed Youth Programme, we could not miss the opportunity of celebrating its 10th Anniversary. During the second half of September 2005, two of our training courses “Step To” and the consolidation and development seminar of the long-term training course TATEM - (Training for active trainers in Euro-Mediterranean youth work)^{VI} took place simultaneously at our centre. This meant roughly 60 participants from European Union, Maghreb and Middle East countries. On September 23rd together with the French National Agency for the European Youth programme and the support of the French Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Education, we organised **a conference-debate on “the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation”**. In front of a large audience (including the 60 Salto trainees) we welcomed spokespersons from the European Commission (DG EAC-Youth Unit) and the French Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Education, a Euromed Youth programme external evaluator and some civil society experts. The discussion focussed primarily

on the EuroMed Youth Programme by approaching the global assessment of the 10 years of the Barcelona process and its achievements, the evaluation of the EuroMed Youth Programme and the presentation of some good practice in training.



Another event we are very proud of was the «**Euro-Med Youth Awards**» for best projects held in Cairo, Egypt, from 12th to 16th of October 2005. This event was co-organised by us together with the Egyptian National Coordination Office, the Euro-Med Youth Platform, under the patronage of the European Commission. **This occasion gathered 54 participants from 23 different countries (selected out of 228**

applications). They were invited to come and introduce their own projects, share good practice, propose new project ideas and find partners through the numerous workshops and partner matching phases. We collected 62 new project ideas including **39 concrete proposals** based on the programme priorities: active citizenship, the place of women in society, fight against racism and xenophobia, environment and heritage protection, minority rights and other themes. Nine “Euromed Youth” projects received awards - eight projects selected by the jury as examples of good practice in Euro-Med Youth cooperation plus an additional award given by the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures.^{VII} The meaningful presence of the Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak increased the visibility of this event and brought a more official “touch” to the ceremony. Moreover, the intervention of the European Commission (both DG Relex and DG EAC) allowed participants to discover more about the present situation and the future of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation including the role played by non-formal education and youth.

To conclude, this was our humble but sincere contribution to the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Declaration. I would like to finish by stressing that a great number of celebrations took place in other countries, in youth and in other sectors, in a spontaneous or organised way in order to acknowledge the importance of what the Declaration generated, of what has been achieved during these 10 years. Last November in Barcelona, the leaders of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership committed themselves to work towards the objectives contained in a new work plan for the next five years^{VIII}. Let’s be confident and say that it can only get better!!!



Euro-Med Youth programme: short chronology and main features

In September 1998, the **first Euro-Med Youth programme** (1999-2001) was adopted by the European Commission and the Euro-Mediterranean (MED) Committee to:

- facilitate the integration of young people into social and professional life and to stimulate the democratisation of the civil society of the Mediterranean partners;
- to improve mutual understanding and cohesion between young people across the Mediterranean region, based on and committed to mutual respect, tolerance and dialogue between the various cultures;
- to increase the importance of youth organisations, developing young people's active citizenship, especially that of young women, and promoting the exchange of information, experience and expertise between youth organisations.

It focused on **the three main actions of the YOUTH programme**: Action 1 (Youth Exchanges), Action 2 (Voluntary Service) and Action 5 (Support Measures).

In November 2001, a **second phase of the Euro-Med Youth programme** was adopted by a decision of the European Commission and the MED Committee. The Commission defined this time five **thematic priorities** focused on the Mediterranean needs as: The fight against racism and xenophobia, active citizenship and the development of civil society; the role of women in society; minority rights and protecting the environment and cultural heritage.

Before launching phase III (2005-2006), the Commission's Cooperation Office "EuropeAid" (DG AIDCO) launched a feasibility study. Following its recommendations the Commission envisaged a decentralisation of the MEDA part of the programme. Such decentralisation will entail the transfer of the management – that is, the selection, issuing of contracts and financial management of the projects presented by youth organisations - from the Mediterranean partner countries – to new structures which will be identified by the authorities of the relevant countries.

The decentralisation process will be divided into two phases: the first one will focus on the creation and capacity building of the new structures. The second one will consist in re-opening project selections, which will be managed in a decentralised fashion by the new structures. The process will take place under the supervision of DG AIDCO, which is responsible for the implementation of the Commissions' external aid. The Commission will establish a Regional and Capacity Building Scheme which will prepare and support the creation of the EuroMed Youth Unit.

More detailed info http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/priorities/euromed_en.html

Notes and references :



I. Since the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004 this process involves the 25 Member States of the European Union as well as 10 Mediterranean partner countries : Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine Territories, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

II. http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/bd.htm

III. http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/program/eval/euromed2004_en.pdf

IV. "Meet In EuroMed" n° 6 (bi-annual magazine edited by the Salto Youth EuroMed Resource Centre) offers some testimonies from participants as well as an overview on our celebrating events in 2005. Downloadable PDF version <http://www.salto-youth.net/meetin/>

V. www.euromedp.org

VI. www.salto-youth.net/stepto ; Tatem is organised within the framework of the Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and run jointly by the Salto Youth RC and the Council of Europe www.salto-youth.net/tatem

VII. To find out more details as well as the winner list <http://www.salto-youth.net/winners/>

VIII. http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/euromed/summit1105/five_years.pdf

Contact :



flo73gio@yahoo.com

