

Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean

Conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Employment and Labour Ministers Conference Marrakesh, 9 and 10 November 2008

1. The Employment and Labour Ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries met for their first Ministerial Conference, hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco in Marrakesh on 9 and 10 November 2008, under the Egyptian and French co-presidencies of the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean. In line with the Euro-Med Foreign Ministers' conclusions of Tampere, Lisbon, and Marseilles, the Conference addressed various aspects related to human development and concrete initiatives and proposals to promote employment creation, the modernization of labour markets, and decent work. Ministers recalled the Euro-Med Five-Year Work Programme agreed at the 2005 Barcelona Summit, and particularly its objectives on sustainable socio-economic development.
2. The Ministers highlighted the urgency of challenges relating to employment, investment in human capital, and decent work for all in the region and committed themselves to a **Framework of Actions** which would contribute to developing a genuine social dimension within the Euro-Med agenda. They recalled the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean on 13 July 2008 which aims to revitalise efforts to transform the Mediterranean into an area of peace, democracy, cooperation and prosperity.
3. Ministers shared the conviction that the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean plays an important role in addressing common social and economic challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region. Ministers discussed the challenges of the current financial crisis and of the global economic slowdown and their impact on employment and labour markets, underlining the need to continue this discussion.
4. Ministers welcomed the participation of the Arab League in the EuroMed employment and labour cooperation following the decision taken in Marseilles on November 3 and 4, 2008.
5. At the beginning of their meeting, the Ministers consulted with high-level representatives of the **social partners**. The Ministers underlined the key role social dialogue needed to play in managing socio-economic change in the Euro-Mediterranean region, as highlighted at the Euro-Med social dialogue conference in Berlin in March 2007. The Ministers welcomed the social partners' contribution, which feeds into the Framework of Actions.
6. The Ministers recalled the **preparatory work of the Euro-Med Employment Workshop**, organized by the European Commission on 12 and 13 December 2007 which gathered together representatives of the governments and social partners of the

Euro-Med countries, as well as representatives of international organizations. The Ministers welcomed the Commission's synthesis concerning this Workshop, which took stock of the challenges of employment, employability and decent work in the region¹.

7. The Ministers highlighted the need for job creation and recalled the commitment of the international community to promote decent work for all (which is based on productive employment, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue in line with the ILO's Decent work Agenda). They highlighted the **opportunities and challenges** resulting from globalization, climate change, rapid technological evolution, the knowledge economy and societal and demographic changes – with rapidly growing populations of working age in the Mediterranean partner countries, on the one hand, and demographic ageing in the European Union, on the other.
8. The Ministers highlighted the need to adapt to these changes in the context of sustainable development, while underlining the diversity in the region, in terms of economic, employment and social conditions, existing policy frameworks, and public finances. They underlined the need to modernize labour markets to make them more responsive to change. They highlighted the need for a better match between – current and future – labour market needs and the development of necessary skills through namely enhanced education and vocational training as well as through reforms at national and regional levels concerning the framework of qualifications and competencies and highlighted the benefits of cooperation in the Euromed context. They also underlined the need to adapt social protection systems, improving their efficiency, targeting and coverage.
9. The Ministers reviewed **socio-economic developments in the Mediterranean partner countries**. They recalled the Workshop's findings, which acknowledged the persistence of key challenges, including high unemployment in many countries, which particularly affects young people and women; a vast informal economy, which is absorbing a high number of job-seekers, deprived of labour rights and social protection; a mismatch between education and labour market needs; poor social protection coverage, and challenges in developing social dialogue.
10. In line with the Commission's workshop synthesis, the Ministers recognized that high economic growth rates in the region are an essential condition, but they are not always sufficient to create the necessary number of jobs needed for social cohesion. There is a need to enhance the investment in human capital, training and employability as well as concrete job creation measures, and to improve the policy environment for these investments. Quality of work and decent work is also beneficial for the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises. It was stressed that economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing. The Ministers also called for the social and employment impact of a possible Euro-Mediterranean free trade area to be considered.
11. Against this background, the Ministers highlighted the interdependence between employment, education and training, social cohesion, economic development and growth, and sustainable development and called for an **integrated approach** where economic, fiscal, employment, social and environmental policies as well as education and training policies go hand in hand.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/international_cooperation/docs/euromed_seminar_12_13_december/synthese.pdf

12. The European Ministers recalled the key role of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs for implementing an integrated approach in the EU Member States. They highlighted in this respect the key role, in the European Employment Strategy, of a “flexicurity” approach, as defined in the common principles of flexicurity endorsed by the European Council in December 2007. European Ministers also reaffirmed the close linkage between the internal and external dimension of the Lisbon Strategy, and the importance of promoting decent work for all in the EU's external relations, particularly in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean.
13. The Ministers of the Mediterranean partners recalled the different strategies and plans put forward in their respective countries in response to social, employment and human capital challenges. They also reaffirmed the priorities concerning employment and social development contained in the Association Agreements and, where they exist, the bilateral action plans between the European Union and the Mediterranean partners within the framework of the ENP.
14. The Euro-Mediterranean partners reaffirmed their **commitment to promote and implement international standards and policy frameworks** in the fields of employment, decent work and sustainable development as laid down within the ILO and the UN.

Framework of Actions

15. The Ministers **underlined the added value of working together at a regional level** among the 43 partner countries in the fields of employment, employability, and decent work and **learning from each others' experiences and best practices**, while taking into account the specificities of each country. To this end, the Ministers committed themselves to a Framework of Actions which identifies the set of policy objectives contained in the ANNEX. They underlined the responsibility of each partner to specify and implement these objectives. The EU Member States will deliver the objectives by implementing the EU Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. The Framework of Actions will be backed-up by a mechanism for exchange and follow-up.

Involving all relevant stakeholders and resources

16. To put this Framework into action, the Ministers called for contributions from **all relevant stakeholders**, including all levels of government, the European institutions, the social partners, business, and civil society organisations. They reaffirmed that enhancing governance is a key condition for successful employment and social policies.
17. The Ministers reaffirmed the crucial importance of an **effective social dialogue** for enhancing employment, employability and decent work in the Euro-Mediterranean countries. The Tripartite dialogue between the social partners and governments is key. At the same time, efforts need to be stepped up in bipartite dialogue between employers and trade unions to enhance their contribution to managing economic and social change. The capacity of the social partners needs to be reinforced in many partner countries. In this context, the cooperation of social partners across the Euro-Mediterranean region should be further developed.

18. The Ministers called on business and investors to contribute to implementing the Framework of Actions through promoting Corporate Social Responsibility², with a view to effectively enhancing labour standards and sustainable development in the Euro-Mediterranean region.
19. The Ministers underscored the importance of fostering the volume and quality of foreign direct investment and trade flows in the Mediterranean region and developing solid links between Mediterranean companies and their European counterparts to contribute to a sustainable socio-economic development of the area, as recalled at the Joint Euromed ECOFIN and FEMIP Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg on 7 October 2008. Ministers also welcomed the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative, given the strategic importance of SMEs regarding job creation and economic development, referred to at that meeting.
20. The Ministers highlighted the **important role of the existing financial cooperation** between the European Union and the Mediterranean Partner countries, notably through the MEDA programme and now the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in the cases of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Turkey. Ministers took stock of financial cooperation, since the Barcelona process, for promoting home-grown reforms to enhance education and vocational training, boost the private sector, promote socio-economic development and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and fight against child labour³. The Ministers confirmed their commitment to the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness, ownership, and donor coordination. They committed themselves to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of EU sector support cooperation programmes, in particular by systematically and transparently coupling both national financial resources and those deriving from external aid. In this context, the Ministers also underlined the benefits of the existing bilateral financial cooperation between individual EU Member States and the Mediterranean countries and welcomed the increasing synergy between cooperation at European and national level and the critical mass of overall EU financial support.
21. The Ministers also underlined the benefits of an **exchange of good practice** at regional level to be supported by the European Commission, involving, as appropriate, its relevant agencies, and **TAIEX**⁴.
22. The Ministers highlighted the importance of cooperation with **international organisations**, in particular the **ILO**.

² Cf. the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy by the ILO, and the OECD initiatives to promote a greater application of the OECD directives for multinational enterprises.

³ Examples and figures relating to existing financial cooperation in these fields are available on http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/human-social-development/employment/documents/projets_esip_meda_enp_en.pdf

⁴ Technical Assistance Information Exchange Unit.

Follow-up and reporting

23. To follow-up the efforts of the Euro-Mediterranean partners in the implementation of the Framework of Actions, the Ministers set up a **Euro-med Employment and Labour Working Group**, chaired by the co-presidency, supported by the European Commission and composed of high-level representatives of all the partner countries, which will meet at least once a year. The group will collect information and data on national trends and policy developments, identify and exchange best practices as well as address issues which arise in the implementation of the Framework of Actions. The partner countries will provide the group with the information needed for drawing up during 2010 a follow-up report on progress under the Framework of Actions. It will build, as far as the EU countries are concerned, on the commitments and reports in the EU Lisbon Strategy and, with regard to the Mediterranean partner countries, on national action plans and reports on national progress to be submitted by 2009.
24. In accordance with the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of the 13 July 2008, which stresses that particular attention should be paid to enhancing quality and to ensuring the relevance of vocational training to labour- market needs, Ministers affirm the need to translate the Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean into concrete projects, more visible for citizens. To that end, the Conference ("Etats généraux") on vocational training in the Mediterranean will be held in Marseilles on 18 December 2008.
25. The Ministers invited representatives of the employers and trade unions to contribute through a "**Euro-Med Social Dialogue Forum**" which would discuss the positions of the social partners with a view to their consultation in the follow-up process, and which should aim at promoting social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean countries and region.
26. The next **Euro-Med Employment and Labour Ministers Conference** will be convened during 2010 to review progress based on the follow-up report.

ANNEX

Key objectives of the Euro-Med Framework of Actions on employment, employability and decent work

1. **Employment policies – more jobs:** The creation of a huge number of jobs is necessary to reduce unemployment and to meet the challenge of fast growing working age populations in the Mediterranean partner countries. Meanwhile, in the European Union, many Member States are still confronted with relatively low employment rates in particular in the context of demographic ageing and a changing workforce composition. In this context, the following objectives are particularly relevant:
 - promoting job creation, attracting and integrating more people into employment, and making work pay for job seekers, including by appropriate fiscal measures;
 - in consultation with the social partners, creating favourable conditions for modern labour markets more responsive to change, improving employment conditions and social protection;
 - effective implementation of active labour market policies and appropriate budgetary provisions in the respective countries;
 - promoting employment policies, along with education and social policies, through Euromed inter-sectoral cooperation;
 - encouraging entrepreneurship and, in particular, the creation of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises that offer decent work opportunities;
 - promoting access to decent jobs for those excluded from the labour market;
 - combating the development of underemployment and working poor.

2. **Enhancing employability – human capital:** Facing the knowledge economy, investment in human capital is more important than ever, as is adapting education, training, and the workers' skills to economic change and the needs of labour markets, and facilitating professional mobility (including from informal to formal employment). In this context, the following objectives are particularly relevant:
- giving priority to reforms of the education systems, wherever necessary, to improve their responsiveness to labour market needs and ensure quality education and life-long learning;
 - reinforcing demand-driven vocational training in key sectors, in terms of financing, organisational structures and promotion;
 - improving the functioning of public employment services, transparent labour market information systems and innovative career guidance services (including by increasing the usage of e-services and encouraging twinning programmes);
 - supporting young people having difficulties integrating the labour market, including by strengthening their professional capacities.
3. **Creating decent employment opportunities – better jobs:** It is important to highlight the key role of promoting decent work and to integrate it into all relevant policies. In this context, the following objectives are particularly relevant:
- completing the process of ratification of the core ILO conventions and ensuring their effective implementation⁵;
 - ensuring the full respect of rights at work, and preventing the segmentation of the labour market and fighting undeclared work;
 - developing effective social dialogue, both at tripartite and bipartite levels;
 - increasing the coverage and level of social protection;
 - improving health and safety measures in the work environment;
 - developing and implementing ILO Decent Work Country Programmes.

⁵ Monaco is not a member state of the International Labour Organisation.

4. Within this Framework for Actions, **the following cross-cutting issues are essential:**
- (a) **promoting equal opportunities for men and women**, enhancing the employment rate of women and, in particular, encouraging their access to decent work opportunities, in line with the Framework of Action adopted by the 2006 Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society;⁶
 - (b) **integrating more young people into productive, formal employment**, including by measures that:
 - ensure equality of access to quality education at all levels for girl and boy students by 2015,
 - take into account the Cairo declaration on higher education⁷,
 - facilitate the transition from school to work. In this respect, the need to counteract gender stereotypes should be taken into account,
 - reduce the mismatch between young people's education and professional aspirations (notably to the public sector) and labour market needs,
 - in this respect, prioritise expanding and improving quality vocational training and raising its attractiveness among young people.
 - (c) **developing an integrated strategy for transforming informal into formal employment**, including by measures that:
 - provide appropriate incentives in terms of taxes and/or social protection,
 - envisage legal, financial and institutional modalities for a gradual transfer towards formal employment,
 - offer training and awareness-raising campaigns,
 - reinforce controls by the authorities or by labour inspections.
 - (d) **manage labour migration**, taking into account the **labour market needs of both sides of the Mediterranean** and aiming at **sustainable development**, including by implementing the actions set out in the conclusions of the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on Migration in Algarve on 18/19 November 2007⁸.

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/women/docs/conclusions_1106.pdf

⁷ http://www.bmbf.de/pub/cairo_declaration-e.pdf

⁸ <http://www.eu2007.pt/NR/rdonlyres/8D86D66E-B37A-457E-9E4A-2D7AFF2643D9/0/20071119AGREEDCONCLUSIONSEuromed.pdf>