

JOINT DECLARATION

The regions' leadership to transform the Mediterranean

EURO-MEDITERRANEAN SUMMIT OF REGIONS
Palau de Pedralbes, Barcelona - 22 November 2025

The Mediterranean is a key geographical space, a strategic bridge connecting Europe, Africa and Asia, and at the same time the epicentre of some of the great global challenges. Demographic and climate change, increasing political polarisation and economic, territorial and social inequalities shape a complex reality that puts internal regional cohesion to the test. Conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and the Sahel, along with other global disputes – such as Russia's war against Ukraine – intensify these challenges and directly impact security, maritime trade, food sovereignty and collective resilience.

However, the Mediterranean is also a place full of opportunities, where there is great potential for cooperation, innovation and sustainability. Areas such as the green and digital transitions, as well as local economic development, open up new avenues for competitiveness and shared prosperity. This dynamic reality makes it essential to strengthen the role of regions and cities, giving them greater adaptability and leadership to promote effective, legitimate and transformative multilevel governance.

The Barcelona Process, of which we are commemorating the thirtieth anniversary this year, already recognises the leading role of regions and cities as actors that give content to a project based on cooperation, dialogue and sustainable development between all shores of the Mediterranean. The involvement of the local and regional world over these three decades has helped translate diplomacy into visible results and has established a solid foundation on which to build a shared future.

In this scenario, the Pact for the Mediterranean is presented as a transformative and urgent initiative: an understanding that promotes a new paradigm of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, based on the legacy of the Barcelona Process and on dialogue on equal footing between the European Union and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean, in which civil society and youth have a key role to play in ensuring its implementation and legitimacy. The Pact calls for greater involvement of regions and cities in defining priorities, implementing projects and evaluating results. The objective is clear: turning political commitments into effective, collective and lasting responses to the integral needs of people and territories.

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Gathered at the Palau de Pedralbes in Barcelona, on the occasion of the Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Regions and in the context of the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the signatories to this Declaration:

DECLARE

1. That the **future of the Mediterranean and Europe** is shared and interdependent, and that the consolidation of an environment of peace is essential to foster progress, prosperity and social cohesion in the region. In this context, the new Pact for the Mediterranean is a historic opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation in an inclusive and sustainable manner, consistent with the values and principles of the European Union.
2. That **regions and cities**, as public authorities closest to citizens, have an irreplaceable role to play in translating this Pact into tangible results on the ground. Their proximity and capacity for action ensure that policies become responses adapted to local realities and people's needs.
3. That the Euro-Mediterranean area requires **multilevel governance** that effectively integrates regional and local authorities at all policy stages. **Territorial and decentralised cooperation** between regions and cities on both shores of the Mediterranean, as well as the strengthening of networks such as **MedCities**, the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions**, the **Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean** and the **Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance**, are tools for innovation, shared resilience and effective transformation, which must be recognised as fundamental pillars of the new Euro-Mediterranean cooperation strategy.
4. That **institutional collaboration spaces** such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) need to be strengthened, while promoting new tools and frameworks – including the exploration of a Mediterranean macro-regional strategy for the European Union – that allow for the coordination of agendas, resources and actors in a stable and inclusive manner.
5. That the new Pact must have an agile and accessible financial architecture, enabling regions and cities to deploy transformative projects with tangible impact, promoting public-private partnerships. The

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cooperation framework **Team Europe**, as well as the **Global Gateway** initiative in the Euro-Mediterranean region, must be given a territorial dimension in order to ensure clear coordination between the European Union and local and regional actors. Moreover, it is essential to ensure simplified processes and direct access to European funding, especially as regards the **Global Europe** instrument. This should make it possible to translate political priorities into well-funded territorial cooperation programmes, to foster public-private cooperation with companies and stakeholders in relevant economic sectors, and to strengthen multilevel and macro-regional governance.

6. That the new Pact should be developed beyond a general approach, building on the three pillars identified – people, economy and security – but with a **clear territorial orientation**. This implies prioritising actions that have a tangible impact on the territories, such as training and youth participation; energy transition and green innovation; inclusive digitalisation; social cohesion, and the management of migration, in accordance with human rights and in a responsible manner. It is therefore necessary to promote decentralisation processes that strengthen the capacities of regions and cities to lead and adapt these initiatives to their local realities.
7. That the new Pact must guarantee an **inclusive approach** that integrates gender and intersectionality to ensure that policies respond to the diverse realities of people, especially those in the most peripheral, rural and island territories. It is also necessary to promote **cultural cooperation and linguistic diversity**, with the active involvement of regions, cities, civil society and youth to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of initiatives.

For all these reasons, promoting a **common voice** from the Mediterranean regions before the European and Euro-Mediterranean institutions, and to ensure an effective role in the new political and institutional framework,

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WE URGE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE RESPONSIBLE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS TO:

- **Incentivise the relevant and central role of regional and local authorities** in the implementation of the new Pact for the Mediterranean, so that regions and local authorities are involved in the **definition and development of the first Action Plan (2026)**. This implies strong leadership from the territorial governments closest to citizens, ensuring that the projects and initiatives of this Action Plan are planned, implemented and evaluated in an effective way that is adapted to local realities.
- Create a **monitoring and evaluation committee grounded in the territory**, which incorporates the local and regional dimension in the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the new Pact and its action plans.
- Set up a **technical assistance fund for decentralised cooperation in the Mediterranean**, co-financed by the European Commission and other donors, both public and private.
- Bring this Joint Declaration to the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Summit on 28 November 2025, as a clear expression of the will and determination of the regions and cities to be full institutional actors in the future of the Mediterranean.

Barcelona, 22 November 2025