



REPORT
on the International Conference

RESETTING EURO-MEDITERRANEAN RELATIONS

Beirut, 4 June 2018
American University of Beirut

Program

10 am	Registration and Coffee
10.30 am	WELCOME REMARKS Christina Lassen , EU Ambassador to Lebanon Muhamad Harajli , Provost, American University of Beirut Elie Haddad , ASI-REM
11 – 12 am	<u>PANEL 1</u> - POLITICAL IDEAS
<i>Chair</i>	Raffaella Del Sarto , The Johns Hopkins University, SAIS Europe
<i>Panellists</i>	Munevver Cebeci , Marmara University & College of Europe Natolin Campus, Karina Goulordava , ASI-REM, Daniela Huber , Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
<i>Discussant</i>	Galip Dalay , Al-Sharq Forum
12 – 1 pm	<u>PANEL 2</u> - MIGRATION AND MOBILITY
<i>Chair:</i>	Marc Schade Poulsen , EuroMed Rights
<i>Panellists</i>	Jad Chaaban , AUB, Khalid Mouna , University of Meknes, Emanuela Roman , FIERI
<i>Discussant</i>	Samira Trap , Frontier Center
1 – 2.30 pm	Lunch Break
2.30 – 3.30 pm	<u>PANEL 3</u> - ENERGY AND INDUSTRY
<i>Chair</i>	Maria Cristina Paciello , IAI, Rome
<i>Panellists</i>	Chahir Zaki , Cairo University, Khaled Guesmi , IPAG, Paris, Nicolo Sartori , IAI
<i>Discussant</i>	Yolla Serieddine , Kafalat
3.30 – 4.30 pm	<u>PANEL 4</u> - AGRICULTURE AND WATER
<i>Chair</i>	Martin Keulertz , AUB
<i>Panellists</i>	Ali Chalak , AUB, Eckart Woertz , CIDOB, Zhour Bouzidi , University of Meknes
<i>Discussant</i>	Kanj Hamadeh , Lebanese University
4.30 pm	CONCLUDING REMARKS Aybars Gorgulu , PODEM

Conference Minutes

The conference entitled “Resetting Euro-Mediterranean Relations” was hosted at the American University of Beirut on June 4, 2018. The event was opened with welcome addresses by Julia Koch-De Biolley (Deputy Head of EU Delegation to Lebanon), Muhamad Harajli (Provost of the American University of Beirut) and Elie Haddad (ASI-REM). The conference was divided into four panels, and each of these analysed Euro-Mediterranean relations from a given perspective: political ideas; migration and mobility; energy and industry; and agriculture and water.

The first panel on “Political Ideas” was chaired by **Raffaella Del Sarto** (Johns Hopkins University). In the first presentation, **Munevver Cebeci** (Marmara University & College of Europe Natolin Campus) analysed how European institutions construct the Mediterranean, as a result of WP1 findings. According to the panellist, the EU uses three discursive practices to construct the Mediterranean – the Mediterranean as a space crucial for EU interests, as a dangerous space and as a diverse geopolitical space – that highlight its “technocratic”, “depoliticized”, and “securitized” approach. From a policy perspective, alongside changing such a discourse, the EU should give more agency to those local civil society actors in SEM countries who are not coopted by their respective governments. In the second presentation, **Karina Goulordava** (ASI-REM) presented the results of her fieldwork in Lebanon, explaining how the local civil society perceives the EU in the field of political ideas. While the interviewed stakeholders have a generally positive view of the EU’s role compared to other international actors such as the US, most of them are very critical of the EU regarding the inconsistency between its discourse on human rights values and the policies effectively implemented in the country. They would like to see a change in EU policies with regard to the question of refugees and that of visas for Lebanese going to Europe. They also asked for a less top-down approach in EU decision-making and a major involvement of local civil society actors instead of only addressing government authorities. **Daniela Huber** (Istituto Affari Internazionali) concluded the panel by discussing how European civil society actors perceive EU policies toward the southern Mediterranean. These bottom-up actors strongly resist the EU discursive practices discussed above. They find that the Mediterranean is a space in which universal values are being violated, civic space is shrinking, and xenophobia and authoritarianism are prevailing. The space is seen as economically, but not geopolitically or ideationally, dominated by the EU. To rebuild an equal Mediterranean space, European stakeholders suggest two policy alternatives: a policy of social justice and human rights, and a policy of reconciliation.

After this, **Galip Dalay** (Al-Sharq Forum) discussed the presentations, suggesting that when it comes to the EU and its involvement in the Mediterranean there is a lack of long-term geopolitical imagination. The EU is lacking a language of transformation, namely of human rights, and is only concerned with stability. He furthermore underlined that, since the context of Euro-Mediterranean relations has changed dramatically, there is a need for a new narrative, new principles and ingredients. The discussion revolved around the policy dilemma of including “local–local” civil society actors vis-à-vis official associations and the many difficulties in doing so, such as bureaucratic problems to access funding

and the fragmentation of civil society. The other issues discussed by participants were: the influence of China and the Gulf, and the proposal of the policy of reconciliation.

During the second panel on migration and mobility, chaired by **Marc Schade Poulsen** (EuroMed Rights), **Jad Chaaban** (AUB) firstly analysed how in Lebanon EU and national policies have been dramatically shaped by the Syrian refugee crisis, distracting attention from other priority issues such as Palestinian refugees, foreign domestic workers, migrant workers under the Kafala system and human trafficking. According to local NGOs, the major problems with the EU are its security approach and closed-border policies. Many local NGOs are not optimistic and are denouncing a lack of human rights in EU migration policy. The second presentation, made by **Emanuela Roman** (FIERI), dealt with the case of Tunisia. She pointed out that in the country, migration is not seen as a priority issue since socio-economic problems have much more relevance. Migration represents a policy issue only for specialists, such as NGOs. Such actors adopt a very critical stance toward EU migration policies, denouncing its Euro-centric and security-based approach. They demand more equal relations between the EU and Tunisia and a major involvement of civil society actors. The third presentation, made by **Khalid Mouna** (University of Meknes), analysed how the EU migration policies in Morocco are perceived by local stakeholders. These actors are critical of EU migration policies in the Mediterranean, pointing out that the security-based approach pursued by the EU is worsening the socio-economic and political problems of South Mediterranean countries and making the regional balance even more fragile. They stress the need for addressing the causes of migration at their root. As a result, to deal with migration, the EU should deal with employment problems and authoritarianism, and ease the restrictions on circulation of people.

The discussant, **Samira Trap** (Frontier Center), pointed out that a distinction between migrants and refugees should be made. The discussion raised several issues. Among them: the lack of a gender dimension in EU migration policy; the question of how to realistically redress the imbalance of power between the EU and South Mediterranean; and the proposal of involving civil society actors in migration policies, which was said to be problematic in so far as it could lead to a diminishing role for the state, which instead is called to play a key role in migration policies and assume its responsibilities.

The third panel, on “Energy and Industry,” was chaired by **Maria Cristina Paciello** (Istituto Affari Internazionali). In the first presentation, **Chahir Zaki** (Cairo University) provided an overview of the main research findings in the field of industry and trade in Euro-Mediterranean relations. Euro-Mediterranean trade is strongly unbalanced, as most of the South Mediterranean countries import equipment and machinery and export low-valued-added products employing low-paid female labour (such as clothing and textiles). In addition, there are non-tariff measures still strongly impeding the access of their products into EU markets. Also, several decades of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation did not translate into any substantial advancement in regional integration, while women and youth are not specifically addressed by any trade policies. Discussing the bottom-up perspective of the interviewed stakeholders, the panellist reported that, while there are differences among the country case studies, they agree on the important role the EU has

to play in the region. However, they denounce their difficulties in accessing EU markets due to many non-tariff measures hindering certain products, as well as the excessive focus of EU intervention on trade rather than on supporting a long-term industrial policy in these countries. During the second presentation, **Khaled Guesmi** (IPAG) discussed the specific case of industry for Tunisia. He pointed out that the question of industry in Tunisia is not taken into account in Euro-Mediterranean relations since the major concern is on promoting trade liberalization. The interviewed stakeholders view with suspicion the opportunity to sign a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU as the impact of trade agreements so far has not brought about the expected benefits. In the third presentation, **Nicolò Sartori** (IAI) analysed EU-Mediterranean energy policies in Egypt and Morocco and how local stakeholders assess them. According to the private sector involved in the energy field, the EU's involvement in the Moroccan and Egyptian energy sector remains extremely limited, but it could be greater. In Morocco, the major obstacle to such cooperation is probably the unwillingness of public institutions to accept external interference in a sector still considered an exclusive national prerogative. As for Egypt, though some major obstacles remain, the overall impression is that the Egyptian energy sector could have a positive future ahead, in which the EU could have a role to play. Renewables are perhaps the area where the involvement of the EU could be most fruitful, because here cooperation might be easier.

At the end of the presentations, the discussant **Yola Serieddine** (Kafalat) concluded by saying that one of the main problems is the lack of communication between the EU representatives in countries abroad and the EU. The discussion was an opportunity to deepen a number of issues raised by the panellists: the lack of involvement of local civil society actors in industrial and energy policies; the need to rethink Euro-Mediterranean trade agreements in ways that lead to more equally balanced relations; the importance of promoting sustainable industrial policies; and, when implementing energy policies, the need to take into account the welfare of local communities, such as ensuring a fair access to electricity, keeping costs low for consumers in poor regions and so on.

The fourth and last panel was dedicated to “Agriculture and Water” and was chaired by **Martin Keulertz** (AUB). In the first presentation **Ali Chalak** (AUB) discussed water and policy issues in Lebanon, arguing that the country is still heavily reliant on food imports due to water scarcity. Owing to many factors, water scarcity among them, the number of female-led farms in Lebanon has been diminishing. The focus of EU policies related to agriculture in Lebanon has been on promoting agriculture projects for Syrian refugees. However, according to local stakeholders, EU policies have been so far inadequate in dealing with Lebanon's major challenges, and EU funding has been unequally redistributed across areas in the country. Among major policy recommendations, the EU should adopt an equitable support plan and elaborate policies that prioritize the needs of local communities rather than the interests of local political parties. During the second presentation, **Eckart Woertz** (CIDOB) discussed the water–energy–food nexus in Euro-Mediterranean relations and then presented the views of EU stakeholders on EU policies relating to agriculture and rural development in the SEM. He argued that the Mediterranean is an important market for the EU countries when it comes to cereals, meat and dairy products, and a competitor when it comes to some fruit

and vegetables. Based on the interviews carried out with European producer associations, he reported that usually they are not aware of EU programmes for rural development in the SEM, such as ENPARD, and gender issues hardly figure on their priority scales. As their major focus is on trade issues, they are concerned with the risk of unfair competition from SEM countries. **Zhour Bouzidi** (University of Meknes) analysed how Moroccan local actors perceive national and European policies in the field of water and agriculture. In particular, she focused on the extent to which EU policies are articulated with national agricultural policies, specifically the Morocco Green Plan, launched in 2008 by Moroccan authorities and strongly supported by international actors, including the EU. EU policies related to agriculture in Morocco are assessed differently depending on the category of local stakeholders. Professional agricultural organizations are critical of the EU's top-down approach. The EU is not present on the field but acts through public institutions. Current European projects targeted to women and youth are small and ineffective in allowing them to escape from precariousness and create sustainable agricultural activities. As far as Moroccan investors are concerned, they see the European market as very competitive and saturated, so that they are looking for alternative markets such as the Gulf. The panel was concluded with remarks by discussant **Kanj Hamadeh** (Lebanese University).

Finally, **Aybars Gorgolu** (PODEM) concluded the conference by summarizing the major findings of the Elite Survey on the perception of EU policies in nine Middle Eastern and North African countries (Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Israele, Qatar and Saudi Arabia).