

# A critical view on migrations according to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

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**Resum:** La Declaració de Barcelona (1995) i el Partenariat Euro-Mediterrani van ser considerats en el seu moment d'una gran rellevància pel canvi que suposaven en les relacions i les polítiques Euro-mediterrànies, degut, en part, per la novedosa inclusió d'un àmbit de treball relacionat amb la cultura i la societat. En aquest es tenia en consideració la importàcia del diàleg intercultural, i es mencionava el rol positiu i constructiu que poden jugar les persones migrants en els seus països d'origen. Però actualment, després de més de deu anys d'aquest acord, es pot afirmar que no s'ha aconseguit cap dels objectius que recollia: aconseguir més pau, seguretat, desenvolupament i una disminució de l'emigració a la regió euro-mediterrània.

En aquest article s'analitzen d'una banda els diversos possibles motius d'aquest fracàs, i més concretament, del fracàs del procés de Barcelona en relació a les migracions. Però també es critica la criminalització dels i de les migrants tant en el discurs institucional del Procés de Barcelona, com en les polítiques europees que el van seguir

**Paraules Clau:** polítiques euromed, Declaració de Barcelona, migracions

**Abstract:** The Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) were considered an important change in Euro-Mediterranean relations and policies because of, for example, the inclusion of a social and cultural working area which took into consideration the intercultural dialogue and the positive role of migrants in their original countries. After more than 10 years, the challenge of peace, security, development and a low emigration rate in that region has not been achieved. This article analyses different possible reasons for this failure as far as immigration is concerned, and at the same time it criticizes the criminalization of migrants in the institutional discourse of the Barcelona Declaration and the following European policies.

**Keywords:** euromed politics, Barcelona Declaration, migrations

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## Introduction

The Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership represented an important moment and a positive step in the relations between the EU and the South-Mediterranean countries. Moreover, it mentioned for the first time the importance of intercultural dialogue and of respect for cultural differences. Although migrations were included in the same section as intercultural dialogue, civil societies promotion or respect for cultural differences, the Barcelona Partnership's real aim was that they would end up disappearing, just like terrorism, international crime or drug traffic.

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After more than 10 years, migrations have not stopped, and what is said about intercultural dialogue clashes with the institutional treatment of migrants and, in general, of migrations. For these reasons, a critical view of the Barcelona Declaration is important in terms of migration treatment and also in terms of the solutions proposed by it in order to finish with migrations (these solutions did not work in the end). This article tries to offer this critical view, after a general presentation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.

## **The Barcelona Declaration and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership**

Before commenting on the Barcelona Declaration and its particularities, it is necessary to present the historical and political context that preceded this important agreement (the way it was done, its contents, all stakeholders, etc.). The reason for this is that historical context is important in order to understand any social issue.

According to Bichara Khader<sup>2</sup>, the way to understand the Barcelona Declaration is to think of it within a global geopolitical context in which the following events took place: the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 and the consequences of the Unification of Germany; the Gulf War in 1991 and its negative effects on the Euro-Arabian relations; the Algerian crisis in 1992; the development of Islamic fundamentalism due to economical and social deterioration in the region; and the GATT agreements and the effects of free-trade in the Mediterranean area.

All these events proved to the EU the emergency of focusing its attention not only on East Europe, but also in the South and East of the Mediterranean sea, in order to establish better relations and promote stability and peace in a region so close to European countries.

Within this context, in 1995 took place in Barcelona the Euro-Mediterranean Conference, in which the Barcelona Declaration was adopted. Those present were 27 Ministers of Foreign Affairs (15 from European countries and 12 from “Third Mediterranean

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<sup>2</sup> Khader, Bichara (2005). El proceso de Barcelona 1995-2005: el texto y el contexto, in “Mediterráneo. El mar que une y separa”, Vanguardia Dossier, Vanguardia Ediciones, N. 17, Barcelona, p: 16-26.

Countries". According to the 2004 EU extension, the Barcelona Declaration was subscribed by 25 European countries (including Cyprus and Malta, which entered the EU in 2004) and another 10 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey). Tunisia had only an observer status in that process.

In that agreement the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was created. It had a new and important challenge: to promote a Euro-Mediterranean area of peace, stability and prosperity. For the first time, this challenge had to be worked on with bilateral and multilateral relations<sup>3</sup>, to establish new cooperation relations to develop and create stability in the area.

The new policy included three different working areas: economical development, political changes (democratisation) and social and cultural cooperation. The title of this new third working area was "*Partnership in the social, cultural and human area: developing human resources and promoting comprehension between cultures and exchanges between civil societies*".

Migrations were included in this third working area. In fact, for the first time, the importance of migrations in the economical and social development of their original countries was considered and accepted. But, at the same time, the principal aim with regards to migration was to reduce it with social and economical cooperation and with job-creating projects. Moreover, the clandestine migration was mentioned as an international danger together with terrorism, international crime and drug traffic.

Because of this, during the following ten years the EU tried to develop different ways to control its external borders thinking that with a strict border control and restrictive policies, migrations would be reduced. With this challenge, in 1999 in Tampere, the European Board decided an Agenda that had the following principal aims: controlling and regulating the arrival and residence of foreign workers, creating a common framework of rights and obligations, inclusive immigration policies, and fighting against illegal immigration.

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<sup>3</sup> Is important to remember that until the Barcelona Declaration, the political relations and agreements were, basically, bilateral (each country established bilateral agreements according to its particular interests and aims).

Therefore, the idea of Tampere 1999 was to promote areas of cooperation in terms of immigration between all the European countries<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the Ministerial Conference in Marsella, in 2000, expressed the importance of the integration of the legal resident immigrants to promote co-development and dialogue between different cultures. But, during the European Council in Sevilla (2002), an Action Plan was elaborated for the administrative cooperation to control external borders. This Action Plan included the creation of an International Agency for the management and cooperation of external borders for all EU member-states. In 2002, a Visa system was also created in order to centralize all information regarding Visas.

In order to understand this process of “closing Europe” it is essential to remember a historical fact that changed the direction of the majority of European external policies: the S-11. This fact justified the rhetoric on the clash of civilisations, and provoked an important change in European policies. Since that moment, security was the most important subject in all political agendas and up from then, all the policies related to human mobility and immigration started being more restrictive and defensive than before.

Even though all immigration policies and laws developed since 2001 talked about immigration in general, Bichara Khader explains that the region considered to be the most dangerous one, was the South-Mediterranean area because of the Islamic religion and its relationship with S-11 (although the majority of immigrants in Europe were not from the Mediterranean area). So we can say that the attack to World Trade Centre in 2001 changed the rhetoric of intercultural dialogue in an international and an institutional level, at the same time that changed many of the policies (in an international and a national level). The policies that were affected the most by this were, obviously, the policies related to immigration.

Within this context, in 2004, the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was presented. It was aimed at strengthening the relations with the countries close to the South and East of the EU. The South-Mediterranean countries included in this new

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<sup>4</sup> Terrón, Anna (2005). Balance y futuro de la agenda de Tampere, in “II Seminario inmigración y Europa. Cinco años después de Tampere”, Coord. Gemma Pinyol (Programa Migraciones), Fundació CIDOB – CIDOB Edicions, Barcelona, p: 17-24.

European policy were Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia. Again, the most important challenge was to increase security, prosperity and stability in the region. But, in that case, the policy was based on bilateral relations to work on common values, external policy, security, economical and social development, trade and internal market, justice, internal subjects and networking. But, the closer the values, the tighter the relationship.

Finally, in relation to workers' mobility, it was established that bilateral agreements would be decided in each case. And, at the same time, immigration was related to the need of working together in justice to prevent "migration pressure", terrorism and human traffic. Thus, immigration was considered, again, a danger for European security.

### **A critical view**

After presenting the contents of the Barcelona Declaration and the new European Neighbourhood Policy, the first thing that we can say is that most challenges –such as the aim of promoting peace, security, and economical and social stability in the Mediterranean region– were not obtained until today. The failure of the measures related to immigration was also important, since the challenge of reducing and finally eliminating migration projects in the Mediterranean region was not achieved.

The first reason that could explain the failure of the Barcelona Declaration in relation to immigration would be the lack of a unified immigration policy in the EU. So, while the EU closed its borders to immigration, each country decided different immigration policies. And, at the same time, each state had different bilateral agreements about migration fluxes with different southern countries (for example, Spain privileged migrants from Morocco because of its historical past).

Eventhough there had been restrictive immigration policies in Europe for a long period of time (mostly since the petrol crisis in 1973 and in 1974)<sup>5</sup>, it was since the attack to the Twin Towers in S-11 2001 that all cooperatives projects were replaced for defensives

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<sup>5</sup> Arango, Joaquín (2005). Nuevos retos y perspectivas para la política de inmigración europea, in "II Seminario inmigración y Europa. Cinco años después de Tampere", Coord. Gemma Pinyol (Programa Migraciones), Fundació CIDOB – CIDOB Edicions, Barcelona, p: 151-156.

European policies at an institutional level. And, at the same time, the social image of Arabian and Islamic people went worse (suddenly, all things related to Islamism and Arabian culture was also related to terrorism). All restrictions related to immigration were general, but as a matter of fact, borders were more restricted to South-Mediterranean immigrants. This has provoked two different processes.

One of the consequences of this was that migrations of southern Mediterranean countries have not increased and in some cases have been reduced <sup>6</sup>: "*Si l'on examine les évolutions de long terme, ces courants migratoires issus du Bassin méditerranéen, en provenance su Maghreb ou de Turquie, sont aujourd'hui en relatif déclin.*"<sup>7</sup>.

It should also be considered that since the 90s, immigration origins and European destination countries have been diversified. Thus, if Mediterranean immigrations in European countries had been basically from *Maghreb* and Turkey, nowadays migrants from Asian, Eastern European countries and South American countries (for example, from Ecuador in Spain) are more important. Thus, the South Mediterranean region is not the most important in terms of migrations and new regions should be considered. Moreover, if the European countries that received more immigration in the past had basically been France and Germany, today there are countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece that receive a big amount of immigrants as well (often just as a door to enter the European Union). Finally, there has been another change since the 90s, and it is the feminisation of migration, and the increase of children migration. Philippe Fargues writes,

*Ces mesures transformèrent progressivement une immigration qui était jusqu'alors masculine, active et temporaire (ou perçue comme telle), en une immigration de femmes et d'enfants qui aboutit à la formation de populations d'origine étrangère, capables de se reproduire su place.*  
(Fargues 2000 : 65)

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<sup>6</sup> Although in the Mediterranean region there are also very important south-south migrations and migrations from different countries to Israel, here we are only talking about north to south migrations.

<sup>7</sup> "Les migrations dans le cadre du partenariat: quel rôle pour l'intégration régionale?", page 204.

Thus, although the South-Mediterranean area was considered the most important one to be controlled, the changes in terms of origins, destinations and migrant profiles should have been considered.

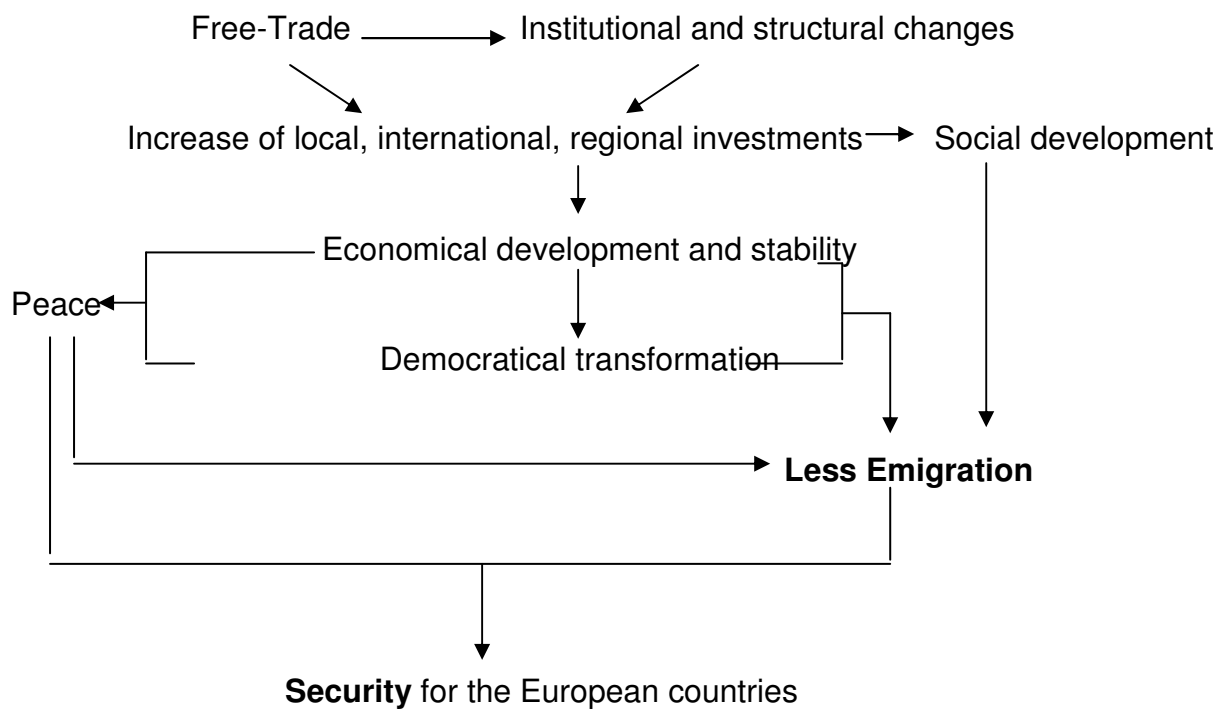
Another consequence of the control of external borders was an increase of clandestine immigration projects. Thus, instead of reducing South Mediterranean migrations, what happened was that people wanting to emigrate to Europe had to do it in clandestine ways. Because of this, nowadays the majority of South Mediterranean immigrants in Europe are those considered “clandestine”<sup>8</sup>. This shows an important contradiction: while immigration policies were becoming more restrictive and promoting clandestine immigration, all states had to create immigrant legalization laws because of the need for workers in their internal labour markets.

Therefore, the EU did not accept its need for migrant workers on an institutional level but many states had to legalize immigrants out of their need for workers in particular niches in the labour market. This is the case, for example, of Spain, where agriculture, the care system and, the construction industry are niches in need of foreign workers. Moreover, we can assert that these niches are clearly defined by ethnicity and gender, for example, black-African men work basically in agriculture, South American or Philippine women work basically in the care system and South American or North African men work in the construction industry. Thus, in contradiction with the idea of ending with clandestine immigrations, the control of borders provoked an increase of clandestine immigration projects.

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<sup>8</sup> Khader, Bichara (2006). L'immigration comme risque transnational, in « Fòrum Universitari de la Mediterrània. The image of Europe in the Mediterranean. 2 i 3 de juny 2005 », Tarragona, URV, 209 p.

Another important reason for the failure of the Barcelona Declaration was the idea that an economical liberalization would make possible an economical and social development and that such development would contribute to achieve peace, reduce immigration and also promote security in the region. This idea can be summarized with the following scheme:



Firstly, this graphic shows the relationship between the three aims and also the three different working areas (economical development, democratisation and social development). The measure that would have made these three hypothetical aims possible was economical liberalization, and the result of that would be the drop of emigration in the South of the Mediterranean region and, consequently, security would be achieved. Because security was the most important challenge for European countries in a region characterized for economical, social and political instability and for proximity to European countries<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Galloux, Michel (2000). Le partenariat, véritable coopération ou approfondissement des déséquilibres Nord-Sud ?, in « La reconstruction politique d'un espace d'échanges : la Méditerranée », Le Caire, Cedej « Les dossiers du Cedej », p:83-103.

Economical liberalization was considered the first and main solution. But it was not taken into account whether these countries had the right economical structure (a structure ruled by diversity) to receive the consequences of a liberalization process. Because of its external debt, international institutions such as IMF, WB had imposed economical transformations in these countries during the 70s and 80s, that caused negative effects for its economies during the 90s. This experience shows that the trade liberalization agreed on at the Barcelona Declaration could not have positive effects, at least in the short term: many small and family companies had to shut down and, consequently, a lot of workers lost their job. In conclusion, if emigration and poverty in that countries were related to a lack of economical development, to apply liberal policies straight away was probably not the best solution. Consequently, economical liberalization did not promote the drop of emigrations in southern Mediterranean countries.

Demographical reasons were also considered. Thus, the demographical situation of southern countries was studied in comparison to the demographical transitions of European countries in the past and their economical and social consequences. The contrast between an old and static northern population and a young, increasing southern population might explain a “demographical pressure” that would mean a bigger labour demand. And, in countries having a big unemployment rate already, such demographic pressure would result in a bigger unemployment rate and, consequently, bigger emigration. According to this idea, migrations were connected to countries with a bigger demographical pressure (such as Egypt), but

*il n'existe pas de causalité directe entre la pression de la démographie et du marché du travail et la migration elle-même. Ce ne sont pas nécessairement les pays où la pression démographique est la plus forte qui concentrent la proportion la plus élevée de migrants . (El Mohoub Mohoub & Oudinet, J. 2005 : 206)*

Moreover, this argumentation did not consider the demographical heterogeneity within northern and southern regions in the Mediterranean. In conclusion, even though it is true that in southern Mediterranean countries the economical situation is an important reason for emigration (and even though it can be true that demographical structure can affect the economical situation), it is not the only one. Certainly, there is an important unemployment rate, because there is more demand than supply in the labour market, but

the mistake of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership policies was to focus only in that reason. Even though, the reason for high unemployment rates in the South has not been solved yet.

In conclusion, international migrations are much more complicated than they were considered to be, in terms of the profile of migrant population and in terms of causes for a migration plan. As it has been stated before, since the 90s there has been a diversification of origins, destinations and also a change of the kind of people who migrate (feminization and children migrations). But it is also important to see that there are a lot of different reasons to emigrate, and each case has its own particular reasons. In this respect, political causes (political persecution, regional or internal wars, etc.), economical and demographical causes (unemployment, poverty, etc.) and personal or social causes must be taken into account. Personal and social causes are particularly important because of social networks play an essential role in the decision-taking of emigrating: these social networks allow an easy access to information and to people that can help those persons planning to emigrate in terms of finding a job or a place to live, etc. This is, in fact, a new but very important element that helps promoting emigration projects.

All this complexity was excluded in the analysis of migrations and in the political decisions taken in relation with immigration. Because of that, the challenge of reducing immigration to Europe was a failure at the Barcelona Declaration. And most of South Mediterranean migration projects have been therefore clandestine. This compulsory clandestinity has not been a real danger for European states (which have been doing periodical legalizations because of their need for workforce), but for migrant people because of its high economical costs and all risks within illegal migration.

However, the most important mistake probably was to consider immigration an international danger just like terrorism, drug traffic or international crime. Even though the Barcelona Declaration took place before that attack to the Twin Towers in 2001, clandestine immigration was treated as a potential danger while in fact emigration is included in the Declaration of Human Rights (although immigration is not mentioned). But this can clearly be summarized with some words by Bichara Khader:

*le partenariat Euro-Méditerranéen peut difficilement déboucher sur une véritable zone de libre échange où tout circule. Certes, les marchandises, les capitaux, les services, peuvent circuler mais les personnes du Sud doivent rester chez elles. Et c'est bien la critique légitime adressée au partenariat : le souci de protéger les Etats européens l'a emporté sur le souci de protéger les personnes?. (Khader 2006: 65)*

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