

Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation: a Strategic Partnership

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The turmoil that some countries to the south of the Mediterranean have been experiencing over the last few years has once again highlighted the persistent lack of economic and democratic balance which characterises these neighbours of the European Union. Right on the EU's doorstep, a majority of people are prevented from taking real control of lives as a result of poverty, which leaves the way open to a possible radicalisation of governments.

The cooperation and development measures already being implemented by European Union have proliferated, demonstrating political commitment and a wide diversity. But they are currently beset by a lack of coordination and transparency and are often random or sporadic. There is also a risk of dispersal, incoherence and inconsistency between the various measures and this ultimately has a bearing on their effectiveness.

Decentralisation can help the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation. It can give a boost to economic development, thereby enhancing economic, social and regional cohesion. But at EU level, the cooperation and development activities undertaken by local and regional authorities are difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate and much work remains to be done. The main drawback to evaluation is that very few Member States compile development cooperation data at sub-national level.

The very serious developments in the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular in Syria and Iraq, make cooperation on foreign policy issues even more critical.

Since 2005, when Turkey started accession negotiations, the country has been a strategic partner for the European Union. Turkey's strategic location also underlines the importance of further cooperation in the areas of migration policy and energy security. The value of such cooperation has become even clearer in light of the considerable challenges posed by recent developments in the European continent, including the Ukraine crisis.