



Centre Nord-Sud du Conseil de l'Europe



Mediterranean Encounters of Tangier 2008

Migrations and Intercultural Dialogue

The Encounters of Tangier, jointly organised by the North South Centre of the Council of Europe and Espace Alternatif, took place on the 25th and 26th April 2008.

The Encounters gathered around fifty participants coming from European and South Mediterranean countries, composed by representatives of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, intellectuals, journalists, as well as representatives of the civil society.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has appointed a delegation from the Commission on Migrations, refugees and population to take part in the work. The Congress of local and regional authorities was represented by the President of the Chamber of local authorities.

The region of Sicily was represented by the regional Minister in charge of the local autonomy, family and social affairs.

Participants have tackled crucial problems, which lie at the heart of the Euro-Mediterranean region's development.

Migrations have been considered as a major stake for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Difficulties handling them are coming from the complexity of the phenomenon and, beyond governments, numerous actors are concerned by the management of migrations. In this perspective, the Encounters have dealt with the role of parliamentarians in the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue on migrations.

Many parliamentarians, including the Secretary General of the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, as well as parliamentarians from the Council of Europe, have presented their work and touched upon the perspectives of a future and constructive co-operation between Institutions in the North and in the South of the Mediterranean.

The work presented by the Council of Europe, marked with a will to protect the rights of migrants, have received the approval of all participants.

A larger involvement of parliamentarians, as being representatives of the people, in the frame of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, has been felt necessary in order to bring legislations forward.

Local and regional authorities, as being another essential actor in the frame of migrations and of the construction of a dialogue between the two Mediterranean shores, have been discussed in the second session of the Encounters. Examples of "good practices" developed by local and regional authorities have been presented through the case of Lebanon, France, Algeria and Malta.

Local and regional authorities have often faced hardships, acting directly on the field. A constructive co-operation is developed in numerous cities and regions of the two Mediterranean shores and result in concrete projects of co-development. Such projects are an added value to the "know how" of decentralised co-operation and reinforce local democracy.

Intercultural dialogue, fundamental to the stability of the Mediterranean region, has for essential vector the Media, which have been the theme of an important session of the Encounters.

Speakers, journalists, media and audiovisual professionals from both the North and the South, have focused on the importance of the media within dialogue, without hesitating to underline the negative role played by this instrument, which gives messages based on the disrespect of others and has a Manichean approach to start with.

The fact that the flow of images and information often convey a lack of positive images from the South to the North, has rendered stereotypes and clichés quite common. Moreover, the "spectacularisation" of information and images gives less importance to a complete and thorough work of the media for a real dialogue between cultures. The primacy of the market on the medias also ruins their role as vectors of dialogue. Hence the necessity of a "regulation" of this media market. The gap between challenges and problems for European and arab journalists has been largely debated on. So were the freedom of expression and the responsibility of medias.

The last session of the Encounters of Tangier dealt with a subject which is at the heart of the Euro-Mediterranean news: the process of Barcelona and the Union for the Mediterranean.

The link between these two processus has been analyzed and the debate on the Union for the Mediterranean extensive. The new approach being the responsabilisation of European and South Mediterranean countries around common objectives and concrete projects, according to a variable geometry. Projects elaborated in the frame of the Union for the Mediterranean must have for first objective jobs creation in countries from the South shore of the Mediterranean. This approach aiming at jobs creation would help to restrict migrations, create economic and social development and thus regional stability. Some participants underlined that there was real expectation from the Union for the Mediterranean. Without forgetting to mention some perplexity as to the actual project, which has, nonetheless, the credit to exist and to create a new regional dynamic of dialogue and peace.

The debates of the Encounters have been honest and constructive, highlighting the real necessity of a dialogue between the people of both Mediterranean shores, as well as the difficulties marking out its implementation. A research of the instruments able to serve a dialogue has been presented as useful too. Recommendations have been proposed, mainly on:

- The reinforcement of the essential role played by the North South Centre,
- On a more committed action of parliamentarians and particularly those from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
- The development of synergies between the different actors of the quadrilogue.

The recommendation to create a Platform on Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue, constituted of representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, coordinated by the North South Centre, has been presented.

The North South Centre of the Council of Europe will guarantee, with its partners from the Council of Europe and Mediterranean networks, a follow up of the works of the Mediterranean Encounters of Tangier.

As part of the follow-up of the Encounters of Tangier, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe has been invited to present the conclusion of the Encounters in a Meeting of working groups of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean on intercultural dialogue and migrations, organised by the Moroccan Parliament and the Mediterranean parliamentary Assembly on the 12th and 13th June 2008 in Fès (Morocco). Parliamentarians from the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, and Mediterranean national Parliaments, interested by the work of the North-South Centre on migrations and intercultural dialogue have accepted to collaborate with the Centre and the Commission on migrations, refugees and population of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in this field and to be involved in the process of the creation of a Platform on Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue.