



Barcelona +25: Cities in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

26 November 2020, 12.00h – 13.00h CET

Online discussion

Organised by: CIDOB's Global Cities Programme with the support of the Barcelona City Council, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), the Mediterranean Network of Cities (MedCities), United Cities and Local Governments, and ISPI (Italian Institute for International Political Studies)

November 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also known as Barcelona Process, a milestone in regional cooperation and multilateralism. In 1995, the ambitious initiative brought together representatives of countries from both shores of the Mediterranean – including those with long-standing tensions between them – in Barcelona, to form a partnership across a comprehensive range of issues based on cooperation, solidarity and peace. In 2008, the partnership was further consolidated with the founding of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Based in Barcelona, the UfM Secretariat became the first permanent structure dedicated to the intergovernmental Mediterranean partnership.

Over two decades after its launch, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is commonly viewed as having failed to meet the ambitious objectives enshrined in its founding Barcelona Declaration. While multilateral processes continue, the region is far from becoming a space of comprehensive cooperation, solidarity and stability. Instead, there is a growing trend towards bilateralism and unilateralism, as well as a rise in geopolitical competition between regional and global powers.

But today, more than ever, the complex and urgent challenges the region faces require intergovernmental cooperation and the co-development of solutions. Climate change, migration, growing inequalities, technological disruptions, and the impact of regional armed conflicts and global crises like the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be tackled by one country alone. To respond effectively to these challenges, a renewal of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is needed, as well as its rethinking in a manner that actively engages sub-state and non-state actors.

With more than half the Mediterranean's population living in urban areas and with the Southern countries experiencing rapid urbanisation, cities play a central role in the formulation of solutions to the region's challenges. For decades cities from the North and South have exchanged experiences and knowledge in decentralised cooperation networks and other partnerships. Acknowledging the region's urban reality, the UfM adopted its first Urban Agenda in 2017 to take a more integrated and coordinated approach to policies, legislation and investments with an impact on urban areas. However, while the agenda offers a large role for local authorities on paper, UfM's intergovernmental setup concedes little room to the engagement of cities and decentralized cooperation initiatives. At the same time, UfM's sectoral approach to cities focuses largely on urban development and infrastructure projects, side-lining cities' contributions in areas such as climate change, migration, the fight against inequalities and, more recently, global health.

But cities on both shores of the Mediterranean have pioneered innovative public policies in all these areas that greatly contribute to the region's sustainability and resilience. To effectively tackle twenty-first century challenges, it is not enough for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership needs to acknowledge the centrality of urbanisation dynamics. It also needs to grant cities a greater role in its decision making. As the 2030 Agenda makes clear, the transition to sustainable development can only be achieved through multi-level governance mechanisms that actively engage local authorities and actors.



On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, CIDOB and its partners launch a series of dialogues on how cities can be given a greater role in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The series brings together mayors, experts, representatives of civil society, research organisations and the private sector from the North and South to explore how the region can transition to a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient future. Together they will address some of the most urgent challenges the Mediterranean faces, including the climate emergency, migration, local democracy and regional cooperation.

The series culminates in a **final online conference on 26 November** in which the mayors of six major Mediterranean cities discuss their views on the region and how cities can contribute to strengthening cooperation and solidarity. Building on the preceding series of dialogues, the conference will address and elaborate on some of the main issues and questions raised in the dialogues.

12.00 – 12.10 **Opening remarks by the co-chairs**

Pol Morillas, Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

Paolo Magri, Executive Vice President, ISPI (Italian Institute for International Political Studies)

12.10 – 12.15 **Introductory remarks**

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona

12.15 – 12.55 **Panel discussion**

Yousef Shawarbeh, Mayor of Amman

Michèle Rubirola, Mayor of Marseille

Tunç Soyer, Mayor of Izmir

Souad Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis

Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence

Moderator: **Pol Morillas**, Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

12.55 – 13.00 **Concluding remarks**

Agustí Fernández de Losada, Global Cities Programme Director, CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)