IMMIGRATION AND COOPERATION IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The migration situation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region has become increasingly important, and it will most likely continue to grow in terms of intensity and complexity, given the persistence and even worsening of the situation of the structural factors, economic, social and demographic, which shape it. In the global context of migration, the Euro-Mediterranean Region stands out as one of the major geographical areas in terms of the significance and the intensity of migration.

The social, political, economic and cultural impact of migration has increasingly been drawing the attention of governments, institutions, social partners, workers and employers associations, and civil society at large, in terms of the situation and the cooperation policies associated with it. At the same time, the importance of migration and cooperation policies has not been left out of the dialogues of Economic and Social Councils in the region either, as they have paid great attention to the analysis and study of this issue, both in their respective national contexts and in the context of their meetings and cooperation programmes.

Therefore, without failing to acknowledge earlier precedents\(^1\), we should recall the Report on Immigration and Cooperation between the Countries of the Mediterranean Region. Rebalancing Tampere and Seville, which was passed at the 9\(^{th}\) Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Economic and Social Councils, held in Valencia on the 18\(^{th}\) and 19\(^{th}\) of November 2004, and was produced by the Spanish Economic and Social Council in cooperation with the Economic and Social Councils of Algeria, France, Greece, Italy and Tunisia.

More recently, the Report on Immigration and Cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean Region was presented at the Euro-Med Summit of Economic and Social Councils held in Istanbul in November 2011. It was produced under the management of the Economic and Social Council of Greece in collaboration with the Economic and Social Council of Spain, the

\(^1\) In 1996, the 2nd Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions passed a report on “Migratory Flows”.

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In the context of this summit it was agreed that the migratory situation and immigration and cooperation policies in the region should be monitored. To this end, the Final Declaration of the Summit included the establishment of a working group under the leadership of the Economic and Social Council of Greece in collaboration with the Economic and Social Council of Spain, the National Council of Economy and Labour of Italy, the Economic and Social Council of Algeria, the Economic and Social Council of Morocco and the Economic and Social Council of Jordan. The first monitoring report, will be presented at the Euro-Med Summit of Economic and Social Councils to be held in 2013.

The final Declaration of the Euro-Med Summit of Economic and Social Councils in Istanbul includes a series of comments on the need for cooperation in migration issues in the Euro-Mediterranean Region in its conclusions. This assessment provides the key policies agreed by the ESCs in the region, and will become the basis for this and for future reports on this question.

Therefore, the above conclusions produced by the participating ESC’s emphasise that migration in the Euro-Mediterranean context is bound to remain an important long-term political challenge for governments on both sides of the Mediterranean, and one which needs to be managed sustainably and humanely.

These also pointed out that, in the interests of the mutual benefits for the political authorities on both banks, close cooperation in this area needs to be developed in order to articulate a long-term Euro-Mediterranean migration policy which facilitates social, economic, educational, family and cultural interaction in the region as a key element for greater political and economic integration between North and South.

In view of all this, the purpose of this report should be to provide diagnostic elements, an analysis of the political and institutional frameworks, and the approaches to the situation and the migration policies that the national Economic and Social Councils of the region and the European Economic and Social Committee articulate, in order to contribute to the policy goals expressed through consensus by the Social and Economic organisations that are represented here.
In the first instance, the Report presents certain elements for a diagnosis in two areas: on the one hand, a reference is made to essential data on demographics, and the economic and labour situation in the region, especially among the Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC’s), given that this context determines the attraction and expulsion factors and that these are the main reasons that influence migration decisions. On the other hand, the main migratory features of migration in the region are analysed, to the extent permitted by the availability of standardised, accurate and up-to-date information.

When presenting a diagnostic analysis, one should take into account both the impact and effects of the financial and economic crisis originated in mid-2007 and the consequences and prospects of the political and social events that have been unfolding in many of the PSM since late 2010. Both events – economic crisis and political changes – have had undeniable impact on migratory flows and on immigration and cooperation policies (Section 2).

The confluence of these two factors has impacted the development of migratory flows in the region, while its duration in time would require orienting and strengthening cooperation policies with two objectives: firstly, cooperating to strengthen democracy and the political and institutional stability of MPC’s, in order to prevent people from being forced to move for reasons of instability and political risk; and secondly, promoting the application of all of the Euro-Med cooperation instruments in order to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis on the living and working conditions of large parts of the population, and in order to prevent people from being forced to move for reasons arising from an increase in social and economic vulnerability.

Consequently, the Report reviews the evolution and assesses the current status of the two main institutional and political frameworks which have a direct impact on the migratory situation in the region (Section 3). On the one hand, the Common European Policy on Immigration and Asylum, which is the set of standards and tools which a supranational integration block such as the European Union uses in an attempt to articulate a common response to immigration into its territory, which, in recent times, has been deeply affected by various events. On the other hand, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership instruments should be analysed in terms of their evolution from the original Barcelona Process to the
present Union for the Mediterranean, as well as the framework presented by the European Neighbourhood Policy, in an attempt to examine their potential for the advancement of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation towards more satisfactory results for all parties.

The focus of the Report should serve to promote a holistic and comprehensive analysis of the situation and the migration policies which takes into account a balanced set of issues: the need for the management of migratory flows, especially labour migrants, in accordance with the needs of the origin and destination countries; improvement of the integration of migrants and their families and adequate protection of their rights; the social and economic development of the countries of origin; dealing with illegal immigration, from a double perspective: combating human trafficking networks and protecting the rights of migrants; and cooperation policies which relate to these issues.

Finally, a number of conclusions and proposals (Section 4) are articulated around a cross-sectional objective: consideration that the migration situation in the region is a key structural factor which will become one of the strengths of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the medium term and guiding cooperation policies accordingly towards continuous improvement of this situation.

It is essential to jointly promote the development of the countries of origin by fostering sustained economic growth which will raise the living conditions of large parts of the population and which will respond to the needs for new jobs resulting from the access to the labour market of many young people at present and in the coming years. To this end, it will be necessary to make progress in political, social, economic and commercial cooperation, in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy. Nevertheless, it would be wise to reflect upon the potential benefits of migration as a development vector in the societies of origin, in areas such as remittance flows, the instruments with which to facilitate the return of skilled workers, or professional training at source, among others.