

led, in 2018, to the creation of the “Majalat” project. It aims at enhancing the dialogue between civil society representatives from the southern Mediterranean countries and the European Union.

The EESC is also cooperating with its counterparts to reinforce dialogue between civil society networks operating in the Euromed region, such as the Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (BusinessMed), the Confederation of Arabs Trade Union (ATUC), the Euromed social economy network (ESMED), EuroMed Rights or the university network UNIMED.

In many of its activities the EESC cooperates closely with other organisations involved in promoting the role of civil society such as the ILO, ETF, ETUC, ITUC, BusinessEurope and the IOE, in order to maximise the benefits of its Euromed activities for its partner civil society organisations.

## Beyond Euromed:

Since 2014, the EESC has set up a Network of Economic and Social Actors within the EU-Africa Strategy. This Network comprises also representatives from North Africa, which are also partners in the Euromed process. In this way, the role of economic and social actors is enhanced, and synergies are established for the whole African continent.

In order to access and find out more about the EESC's activities in the Euromed region, please visit our website at:  
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.euromed>  
and <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.eu-africa-strategy>



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# The EESC and the Mediterranean

REX  
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## Long-standing cooperation and frame of activities

In November 1995, at the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona, foreign affairs ministers of the EU and Mediterranean partner countries concluded a regional partnership, the aim of which was to establish a common area of peace and stability, create an area of shared prosperity, develop human resources, promote understanding between cultures and foster exchanges between civil societies. The Barcelona process was born and provided the foundation for broader cooperation across the Mediterranean. This process was complemented by the EU's introduction, in 2004, of its European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Revised in 2015 to reflect the changing context in the region, this policy facilitates the EU's bilateral relations with its partners, based on the EU's Association Agreements with individual southern partner countries, and allows the EU to take into account the specific situation of each country.

To build up the Barcelona process through specific projects, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) was launched in 2008. Today, it spans 28 EU Member States and 16 partner countries<sup>1</sup>.

The EESC's mission both in the past and the present has been to involve socio-economic players and other civil society representatives in policy-making in the region. The EESC firmly believes that this is vital for the overall success of policies and is fully committed to developing the civil society dimension of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, even more so now in a current context where the space for civil society is shrinking in the region.

## The Euromed Summits

The EESC responded to the Barcelona Declaration of 27-28 November 1995 by setting up a network of Euromed Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions which meets at an annual summit. Since 1995, these yearly summits have examined issues that are crucial to the future of the Mediterranean region and set out recommendations addressed to the political authorities.

For each summit, reports are drawn up on various subjects, in cooperation with the economic and social councils of the EU Member

<sup>1</sup> Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya (observer status), Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Syria (Syria has suspended its membership to the UfM on December 1, 2011), Tunisia and Turkey.

States and the Mediterranean partner countries. This way of working fosters mutual understanding and enables the representatives of both southern and northern countries to make joint recommendations.

In order to coordinate the activities and work of the EESC and its partners, the EESC has set up a Euromed Follow-up Committee which meets several times between each summit. The task of the Follow-up Committee is to promote the summits' proposals and recommendations, to evaluate the action taken on them, and to publicise the work of the EESC and its partners in the Euromed region.



## Promoting the role of civil society in the Euromed region and beyond

The EESC collaborates fully with the Union for the Mediterranean to include civil society concerns in the work of the institution. This objective is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding between the EESC and the UfM secretariat signed in 2015 which aims at strengthening the involvement of economic and social stakeholders from the UfM countries in UfM processes and projects, in order to achieve the objectives of the 2008 Paris declaration regarding active civil society participation in the Union for the Mediterranean.

Since 2013, the EESC is regularly represented at the UfM Ministerial Conference and, in this way, contributes the voice of organised civil society to the highest political gathering in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

It is also important, the EESC believes, that the EU institutions and the UfM should make greater use of economic and social councils and other civil society organisations, for example by consulting them on UfM projects and asking them to disseminate information on policies.

## Conveying the messages of its partner institutions and organisations

The EESC maintains regular contact with economic and social councils in those partner countries that have them and supports their efforts to develop their consultative function vis-à-vis their governments.

At the request of civil society organisations in the partner countries that do not have an economic and social council, the EESC has been sharing know-how and experience and helping them to set up permanent structures for dialogue with their respective governments. For instance the EESC has been actively involved in the setting up of economic and social councils in Morocco, Israel, and Jordan and has contributed to the draft law regarding the possibility of setting up an ESC in Palestine.

## Promoting civil society consultation in the Mediterranean countries

In the framework of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, the EESC has been urging the European Commission and national governments to help strengthen representative civil society organisations, to dialogue and to involve them in the evaluation and implementation of all aspects of Mediterranean cooperation. The EESC has worked together with the Commission, the EEAS and the Committee of the Regions in setting up a regional dialogue, which