

# Make the Union through its people: a “migratory ECSC”



Moving from an administrative migration approach to an economic approach based on mobility

## SUMMARY

THERE ARE SIX REASONS why the movement of people should be one of the Euro-Mediterranean common policies: 1) the complementary age structures of North and South; 2) the constant need to use mobility to adjust work markets between countries in the region; 3) the need to circulate for professionals, who are increasingly numerous and diverse; 4) international competition to attract qualified workers, who continue to leave the region; 5) the community of interest concerning countries from both sides on managing migration; 6) the specific cultural characteristics of regional Euro-

Mediterranean integration, whereby the intermixing of people is a historic legacy and a strategic necessity.

In the Mediterranean over the long term, inhabitants are unlikely to understand the concept of a union where people cannot circulate freely. There is much work to be done before the Euro-Mediterranean can assimilate the statement of the UN Global Commission on International Migration that, “the old paradigm of permanent migrant settlement is progressively giving way to temporary and circular migration”.

## UFM'S PROPOSITIONS FOR ACTION

SA common (“migratory ECSC”) policy, based on the joint responsibility of states and their complete freedom to participate in it, would aim to progressively establish free circulation for people within the UFM area. This would begin with easier mobility for the increasing numbers of professionals, and then expand to general free circulation within countries that agree to it, and ultimately involve extending the equivalent of the Schengen Area to SEMCs. It would include the following measures for making professional mobility easier:

- Long-term, multiple-entry visas for all professionals who belong to trans-Mediterranean professional networks to be labelled by the UFM;
- “Qualifying migrations”: host countries would fund training programmes for professionals

who are needed in their work markets and have received initial training in another country in the region; both countries would recognize the professional experience gained;

- “Circular migrations”;
- Progressive introduction – but as fast as possible to compete with other global regions and especially North America – of a passport between countries that want it allowing professionals with “high human capital” to circulate freely (e.g. businesspeople, artists, academics, etc.)

A Euro-Mediterranean Migration Agency (EMA) would orchestrate this policy:

- Coordinating policies for regulating and controlling migrations;
- Combating illegal work or work that is degrading for humans and penalizing for taxes;

- Informing about temporary work programmes for migrant workers;
- Facilitating mobility for young experienced professionals (North-South and South-South);
- Promoting flows of graduates in the region and regulating to avoid a brain drain;
- Organizing flows needed by the knowledge economy and especially launching (at last!) Euromed Erasmus, which has found consensus for a long time;
- Its funding would be assured by voluntary contributions from states, as well as a contribution that could be defined in proportion to the number of graduates hosted coming from SEMCs;
- Initially, the Agency would be arbitrated by UFM heads of state; afterwards it would become a “High Authority”, acting according to the sovereignty that states have agreed to transfer to it.

## 1. The potential complementary effect of migration in the Mediterranean

### 1.1. Circulation of people in the Mediterranean: a misplaced question

Migration has a much larger place in public debates than it does in actual international exchanges, because people circulate a lot less freely than goods and capital. The Mediterranean is no exception to the rule. Despite the European Neighbourhood Policy's statement in 2004, which outlines "four freedoms" – free circulation of goods, services, capital and people – the region is still a long way from achieving the level of circulation needed for deep-seated integration to take place. The liberalization of the exchange of goods and services cannot replace the international mobility of production factors, and especially work. The idea of substituting migration with trade continues to inspire the region's governments, yet what is needed is to activate the tools for mobility, which will be an essential partner to economic interdependence between the two sides of the Mediterranean.

The UNDP's latest report on human development ("Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development", 2009) reminds us that, "Some regions are creating free-movement zones to promote freer trade while enhancing the benefits of migration—such as West Africa and the Southern Cone of Latin America"; the Mediterranean should ideally be included in these regions<sup>(1)</sup>.

South and East countries of the Mediterranean (SEMCs) have frequently made requests for increased mobility from European countries, which they accuse of making only minimum adjustments to their migration policies, limiting the movements of people for security reasons. European countries reply to SEMCs that there is not always guaranteed freedom to circulate between countries in the South, and that opening up circulation would also result in "brain drain" problems to which SEMCs themselves would be opposed. Despite recent inter-government cooperation between the North and South Mediterranean, the migration issue is still a bone of contention between countries in the region. It remains dominated by security and demographic aspects, even though it should be tackled from a more economic and strategic angle.

### 1.2. The six components of Euro-Mediterranean migratory interdependence

The first of these is the complementary age structures of European countries and SEMCs. This is the argument most frequently put forward, especially since the UN's "Population" Department published its forecasts, which show that Europe is set to lose tens of millions of workers in the coming decades. The argument is persuasive: ageing populations on one side, and young, available populations on the other, because SEMCs are reaching the end of their demographic transition – a period of "demographic windfall" during which there are numerous young workers and few people in their charge (children and the retired). However, the argument is less convincing than at first sight, since the reduction in the number of active workers in Europe could be compensated by a continued rise in female employment rates and the probable extension of the retirement age. In other words, the future of migration in the Mediterranean should not be seen as an immense transferral of inhabitants from countries with excessive populations to those with reduced populations.

The other components are more important than the first, purely demographic, component, yet they are given insufficient attention. The first of these is the permanent need to adjust work markets between countries in the region. There will always, and increasingly, be occasional requirements for workers in certain towns and countries, particularly in Europe, given the weak professional mobility that exists between, and even within, EU countries. The contribution of doctors, nurses and agricultural workers from SEMCs in Europe's local work markets plays an adjustment role that is set to increase, especially with the boom in service activities ("mode 4" of the General Agreement on Trade in Services – managing the movement of people). Mobility should be as fluid as possible so that these adjustments can be as efficient as possible. A demonstration of the reciprocal benefits can be seen in the mobility of CEEC workers in Western Europe since 2004: some Western countries, Ireland and the United Kingdom in particular immediately accepted the free circulation of workers from the new EU member states. Their contribution not only made local employment markets more dynamic, but when the financial crisis reduced demand, Slovaks and Polish people returned home and found work thanks to the skills they had acquired when they migrated to the West.

The third component is businesspeople's need to circulate. If economic integration is to bring the two sides of the Mediterranean closer, businessmen and women need to be able to circulate easily. This is a well-known fact. Less well known is that the definition of "businesspeople" has changed. They

(1) See also the report: "Long term perspectives on people & job mobility for MENA", World Bank, 2009.



are infinitely more numerous and diverse than they used to be – e.g. members of diasporas returning to their countries for family reasons or leisure and doing a bit of business while they are there; and more and more women are involved in business. They work for major companies, but increasingly also SMEs and the various professional networks being set up in the region. We should not forget that the European demand for visas has undermined this multitude of economic exchanges – to the advantage of places like Dubai and Istanbul.

The fourth component is international competition to attract qualified migrants. With the entry into the knowledge economy, attracting the highly skilled has become a geo-economic issue of the utmost importance, and one that Latin Europe is often too scrupulous and cold-footed to grasp. As a result, it attracts proportionately less and less highly skilled workers from SEMCs, who instead turn to the Gulf, the United Kingdom and the Americas. People who migrate are in fact increasingly highly qualified. To re-establish preferential links between the two sides of the Mediterranean, a whole system needs to be put in place, from student internships in different countries to facilitating professional installations – way beyond the European blue card scheme.

The fifth component is the community of interest involving countries from both sides for managing regular and irregular migrations. SEMCs have also become immigration countries, and the European Union asks for their help in regulating migrant flows. This cooperation has commenced in the form of the first coordinated proposals for sending back clandestine migrants.

The final component is the most important. It is the cultural dimension, but its economic impact is crucial. This involves the actual conception of regional integration and the Union for the Mediterranean. We will not be able to achieve true Euro-Mediterranean integration without involving its people; we will not be able to build a wall round the Mediterranean like the United States have built on the Rio Grande; we will not be able to do as the “ASEAN plus three” countries have done and limit regional integration to trade and investment in order to avoid the arrival of millions of underpaid Chinese workers. For deep-seated historical and cultural reasons, and because the respective presence of a North to South heritage and a South to North heritage is the foundation of this region’s culture, we cannot do otherwise than recognise this interaction through the intermixing of people. This is furthermore the best way to operate work markets, circulate skills in line with business requirements, reduce tensions linked to identity, and definitively consign to history the so-called “clash of civilizations” theory.

### 1.3. We have already made the move from migration to mobility

There is already a significant degree of circulation in the Mediterranean, although it is rarely accounted for in most international migration statistics – if only because migrants’ departures from immigration countries are not well measured: departures of Algerian, Moroccan and Turkish immigrants from European countries are often equivalent to more than half of arrivals. Once it has reached maturity, a migratory wave tends to balance departures and arrivals (whether people are returning to their country of origin or settling in another developed country).

Circulation is also increasing because migrants are more and more mobile and sensitive to economic circumstances, increasingly well qualified (including clandestine workers), better connected to opportunities for work abroad, and can easily keep in contact with their country of origin thanks to new means of communication and reduced transport costs.



## 2. A “migratory ECSC” to gradually move towards free regional circulation

THE OBJECTIVE OF A COMMON (“migratory ECSC”) policy should be to progressively establish free circulation of people within the UFM area. This would start with easier mobility for increasing numbers of professionals, then expand to general free circulation in countries that agree to it, and ultimately extend the Schengen Area to SEMCs

### 2.1. Measures for facilitating professional mobility:

- Long-term, multiple-entry visas for all professionals who belong to trans-Mediterranean professional networks to be labelled by UFM (e.g. Euromed Postal, Copeam, Euromed capital forum, Med Fer, etc.);
- Simplified visa procedures (i.e. computerization, shorter administrative circuits), more flexible rules on allowing inhabitants of UFM member countries to settle;
- Extended list of open trades with no opposition to the work situation and rules for entry and residence for foreigners from UFM member countries;
- “Qualifying migrations”: host countries would fund training programmes for professionals required in their work market who have been educated in another country in the region; both countries would recognize the professional experience acquired;



- “Circular migration”, e.g. based on the Swiss model using work permits whose duration could be proportional to qualifications: four months for a seasonal grape-picker, two years for a doctor (including tariffs readjusted to current levels and a pledge to return organized in partnership with the country of origin so that the doctor can find a position in line with the experience acquired), etc.;
- Then the progressive introduction – but as fast as possible to compete with other global regions and especially North America – of a passport between countries that want it allowing professionals with “high human capital” to circulate freely (e.g. businesspeople, artists, academics, etc.)

## 2.2. A Euro-Mediterranean Migration Agency (EMA) for orchestrating this common policy

A Euro-Mediterranean Migration Agency would organize and facilitate these flows. Based on the European Commission model, it would be under the authority of members designated by states that opt to participate (non-binding). It would give accounts to national parliaments. Its missions would be as follows:

- Coordinate policies to regulate and control migration;
- Combat illegal work that is degrading for humans and penalizing for state taxes;
- Inform about the main available programmes for transnational temporary work (e.g. tourism, harvesting, etc.);

- Facilitate (including financially) mobility for young experienced professionals who fit in with programmes for transferring expertise (North-South and South-South);
- Promote the flow of graduates within the region to avoid brain drains to other regions in the world; regulate these flows with the aim of providing all the information and remediation required to face up to the brain drain problem;
- Organize flows required by the knowledge economy: student exchanges, professional internships, a centralized point of information on funding for existing and future student mobility (and at last launch Euromed Erasmus which has gained general consensus).

Funding for the Agency would come from (i) voluntary contributions from states, (ii) transmission to the EMA of a share of the budgets of national administrations for cooperation, (iii) a contribution from countries hosting highly skilled migrants, used to fund training programmes in the countries they come from (to compensate the brain drain).

Initially, the Agency would be arbitrated by UFM heads of state; afterwards it would become a “High Authority”, acting according to the sovereignty that states have agreed to transfer to it.

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