



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



Brussels, 27 March 2006

RECOMMENDATION

of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

on Economic and Financial Issues, Social Affairs and Education

adopted on the basis of the draft tabled on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education

by Dr. Hashim Dabbas, Chairman

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly:

- having regard to the recommendation adopted in Rabat on 20th November 2005,
- having regard to its meeting held in Lisbon on 30th January 2006,

On Education:

1. Views illiteracy rates in the South as an obstacle facing the development of the region; believes that education and training legislation must be upgraded as a top priority and a prerequisite for the achievement of economic development in the region; calls, to this end, for basic education to be expanded and the number of schools providing intermediary and higher education to be increased;
2. Member States must be urged to establish programmes capable of helping weak economic areas to develop their secondary and university education and to make such education available in particular for women from poor backgrounds;
3. Insists on the need to review the content of a number of teaching programmes in the Euro-Mediterranean countries: these include caricatures and half-truths about some of their partners which reinforce the climate of hostility and hatred and prevent any tangible progress in establishing sound relations between Euro-Mediterranean partner states;
4. Stresses the need to set up student, trainee and worker exchange programmes, as these programmes may contribute to enhancing knowledge; calls for the support of the existing TEMPUS, ERASMUS and MUNDUS programmes and for these programmes to be extended to include the secondary education level; urges Member States of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to support exchange programmes for secondary level teachers and university professors in areas relating to teaching and orientation; stresses also the need to promote academic exchanges as well as exchanges between academic and research institutions;
5. Stresses the need for a sustained commitment by the European partners to provide the necessary material and technical assistance for the reform and the development of the education system in Mediterranean countries;
6. Stresses the importance of education and calls on the parliaments of the Euro-Mediterranean region, along with the European Parliament, to conduct an evaluation of educational programs funded by MEDA;
7. Stresses the need to set up a parliamentary cooperation network in the Euro-Mediterranean region so as to harmonize educational programmes; calls also for the establishment of a regional network of youth organizations so as to work to uphold national and international values that advocate peace, justice, equality and respect for the law;
8. Emphasizes the need to find ways of strengthening cooperation between the private and public sectors so as to upgrade the level of human resources working in the field of education;

9. Suggests examining the possibility of involving southern partner countries in the actions included in the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development;
10. Considers that a Euro-Mediterranean fund for scientific research should be set up with the aim of establishing a community of learning between universities of the Euro-Mediterranean countries, supporting researchers in the southern partner countries, improving their working conditions, promoting the performance of universities and promoting cultural exchanges between all the universities in the Euro-Mediterranean region;

On social Stability and Social Rights

11. Believes that employment and equal access to job opportunities are important factors for social stability and economic progress for men as well as women; urges Member States of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to make women's social rights an integral part of their constitutions;
12. Emphasizes the need to increase support for southern countries to achieve social development and work to narrow the gap between southern and northern countries, as well as to reduce poverty and social deprivation in southern countries; calls for the drafting and dissemination of a Mediterranean version of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and further calls on the European Commission to step up material aid for Mediterranean peoples who suffer most from the problems of under-development;
13. Encourages Member States to implement the rules of good governance and calls on northern countries to provide technical assistance to countries that are in need in order to attain that objective;
14. Recommends that, in order to enhance economic growth and create jobs in the South of Mediterranean, more attention should be given to all reforms and instruments necessary to attract European investments in the area, including the strengthening of industrial cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean;
15. Calls for strict respect for core labour laws and social rights as part of the common values on which the European Neighbourhood Policy and partnerships are based; urges all the partners concerned to be integrated in the Action Plans, and urges EMPA Member States to implement all international agreements relating to social rights with full respect for the rights of women and children;
16. Calls for an increase in financial appropriations allocated to least-developed countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean under the MEDA 1 and MEDA 2 programmes with a view to helping those countries shoulder the burden of the development process, modernise their industries and introduce advanced technologies;
17. Recognises the sovereignty of visa policy of EU and non-EU States, but believes that workers' freedom of movement is an important factor for economic development and for enhancing relations between societies on both sides of the Mediterranean; considers that freedom of movement of workers should be encouraged, particularly for workers who

meet the needs of the Euro-Mediterranean-Partnership; believes that the difficulties facing citizens from the southern Mediterranean countries in obtaining visas for European countries create impotence and frustration among the social players and seriously undermine the socio-cultural dialogue and exchanges; affirms therefore the need to enhance existing cooperation within the context of the Association and Co-operation Agreements so as to ensure the free movement of workers;

18. Calls upon the Mediterranean countries to make efforts to support the private sector which is acquiring a key role in combating unemployment owing to the job opportunities it provides, and this contributes substantially to ensuring social stability;
19. Believes in the need to open a social dialogue on issues such as employment and social policies, and considers that the situation must be analyzed and evaluated to determine the major challenges and harmonize policies relating to poverty, employment and social dialogue as well as working conditions and social protection;
20. Views social affairs as a sensitive issue in the Euro-Mediterranean countries; considers in this context, that the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education must work together with national parliaments and with the relevant committees to determine priorities for the year ahead and outline the framework of future dialogues;

On Energy

21. Affirms the importance of establishing cooperation between EMPA Member States in the area of energy supplies; calls on all Member States to support the use of energy efficiency, energy savings and renewable energy and to cooperate in these fields; considers that cooperation should be based on studies, research and projects to find energy alternatives, particularly in the light of the rise in fuel prices, which have a direct effect on economic development and on the standard of living in the partner countries;
22. Recognises that the dependence of most Member States of the EMPA on external energy sources is continually growing and that increasing demand for external energy supplies is likely to place additional pressure on existing supply routes; calls for the development of new routes, potentially affecting future availability and prices of supplies;
23. Welcomes efforts aimed at establishing a Euro-Mediterranean energy market, such as sub-regional projects that are being undertaken to ensure gradual integration between electricity markets in the Mashreq and Maghreb countries and the European Union; considers that the same applies to gas markets in the Mashreq and other energy projects, particularly renewable energy, which are of interest to countries of the region;
24. Welcomes the practice of the European Investment Bank (EIB) of financing projects that develop renewable energy sources and promote the efficient use of energy and investment facilities (FEMIP) through MEDA, which has made tangible efforts, by establishing project management units, to strengthen the institutional capability of marketing bodies and enhance the benefits of those projects;

25. Calls on all Member States of the EMPA to support the fundamentals of energy policies, which were endorsed at the Energy Forum in April 2003 and the Ministerial Conference of the Euro-Mediterranean Energy Forum held in Athens in 2003 and in Rome in 2004;
26. Urges Member States of the EMPA and the EU to take a step further under the MEDA programmes and promote the potential of renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy and energy efficiency, support the Kyoto process, promote more efficient energy demand management and harmonise rules and standards, as well as information systems and statistics used in the energy sector in the southern Mediterranean countries;
27. Calls for measures to ensure a secure supply of energy to enhance the safety, security and sustainability of Euro-Mediterranean energy supplies, and to facilitate the funding of energy infrastructure between South and North and between South and South; calls also for added technical support aimed at developing Euro-Mediterranean energy policies in addition to adopting a prudent agenda for a Euro-Mediterranean energy partnership;
28. Calls for the establishment of a fund to support countries affected by the hike in fuel prices;
29. Calls for environmental issues relating to the expansion of energy supplies to be addressed satisfactorily;

On Free Trade and Economic Development

30. Calls on Euro-Mediterranean Member States to implement harmonized regulations on trade and competition and highlights the fact that discussions were held at the 5th Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Trade Ministers in Marrakech on 24 March 2006 regarding ways of implementing and completing the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area by 2010 and on how South-South trade will be enhanced;

Welcomes the fact that official negotiations have been initiated regarding a supplementary protocol to the Association Agreements regarding the liberalization of trade in services and investments and the decision taken by the Trade Ministers opening the negotiations on Conformity Assessment Agreement, which is a prerequisite for the partner countries to increase their exports;

Calls for a more far-reaching liberalization of trade in agricultural goods to achieve the completion of a genuine free trade area in accordance with the negotiations and results of the WTO;

31. Invites the European Commission and EU Council to evaluate the study that was conducted by Manchester University on the economic and social effects of establishing a free trade area in 2010;
32. Calls for enhanced cooperation between the EMPA, the European Commission and the European Union Presidency in various fields, particularly the economic field;

33. Calls for enhanced cooperation with the Ad hoc Committee on Women's Rights, which was initiated during the EMPA plenary session in Cairo on the role of women in society and development, namely in economic areas;
34. Affirms the need for the continued financial support for the people of the Euro - Mediterranean Member States in the areas of education, health and infrastructure and takes note of, and supports, continued EU financial aid for the Palestinian people;
35. Calls for contacts to be intensified between members of the Committee on Economic and Financial Affairs, Social Affairs and Education and the foreign ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean countries with the purpose of implementing the committee recommendations;
36. Requests that legislation and mechanisms for direct investment be developed, while establishing incentives for channelling private investments; calls also upon EU Member States to open up their markets to the products of Mediterranean countries, in accordance with the principle of free trade;
37. Considers that environmental cooperation should be established between the partner States, while attaching great importance to the aquatic environment, by means of a joint assessment of and quantitative and qualitative controls on water;
38. Calls for the partnership to cover new territory such as small and medium-sized enterprises in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
39. Stresses the need to establish a coordinated programme to tackle natural disasters in the Euro-Mediterranean region;
40. Emphasizes that the partnership conventions must help develop productive industrial structures in Mediterranean countries;
41. Calls on the Euro-Mediterranean Member States to provide, where necessary, financial compensation to the poultry or farming sector in case of an outbreak of bird flu, especially with regard to the highly pathogenic and deadly H5N1 strain, in order to implement effectively all preventive, surveillance and contingency measures and thus control the spread of bird flu in the region;
42. Calls for the finalisation of all the procedures to approve and implement the Association Agreement with Syria in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.