

One year later, EUROCHAMBRES deploras deadlock of Union for the Mediterranean

One year after the optimistic launch of the “Union for Mediterranean”, EUROCHAMBRES regrets that none of its two main components have advanced: the ambitious aim of creating a Union for political dialogue on shared Euro-Med challenges was repeatedly blocked by different countries, making their cooperation in this matter conditional on the solution of political conflicts in the region, and the identified priority projects still wait to be kick-started as they suffer from a lack of financing and ownership, with the secretariat of the Union still to be created.

Georgios Kassimatis, Deputy President of EUROCHAMBRES, intervening in the Athens Business Forum in Greece today, deplored: *“The dynamics we witnessed a year ago when the Union was launched were washed away and all parties seem to be focussed on their internal problems caused by the global economic crisis, bilateral disputes or institutional deadlocks as for example the delay in ratifying the Lisbon Treaty in the case of the European Union.”*

“An important project like the Union for the Mediterranean – which is meant to shape the future of more than 700 million people – needs real, continuous commitment from all parties involved and cannot be taken hostage by political disputes between some of the member countries or the global economic development. If we put it on hold whenever one of the partners faces something ‘more urgent’, the Union loses all credibility and will remain lip service.”

EUROCHAMBRES calls on public authorities to re-focus in order to make the Euro-Mediterranean projects become reality. In particular, Chambers expect progress on the Mediterranean Business Support Initiative for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises – one of the priorities of Union for the Mediterranean – and look forward to the meeting of 20-21 July in Milan (Italy) where Governments, the private sector and experts should focus on promoting economic cooperation in the region.

“Invest in Med” – Concrete results after first year of existence

On their side, EUROCHAMBRES and the other partners of the MedAlliance consortium are already active in fostering EU-Mediterranean economic relations, as the concrete results of the first year of implementation of the “Invest in Med” project demonstrate.

32 initiatives have been put in place in several economic sectors, involving the 27 EU Member States and 9 Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia). These initiatives were selected during two calls; a third one is currently open until mid-November.

The Invest in Med programme, which aims at developing sustainable trade relationships, investments and enterprise partnerships between the two rims of the Mediterranean, is funded at 75% by the European Union for the period 2008-2011. It is implemented by the MedAlliance consortium, gathering economic development organisations (ANIMA, leader of the programme), Chambers of Commerce (ASCAME, EUROCHAMBRES), and business federations (BUSINESSMED). The members of these networks, as well as their special partners (UNIDO, GTZ, EPA Euroméditerranée, World Bank, etc.), gather a thousand of economic actors mobilised through pilot initiatives centred on key Mediterranean promising niches.

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