

Assemblée des Citoyens et
Citoyennes de la Méditerranée

Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly

مجلس مواطني ومواطنات المتوسط



MEDITERRANEAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY :
TOWARDS A MEDITERRANEAN COMMUNITY
OF PEOPLE

FOUNDING CHARTER

May 31, 2009

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1. PREAMBULE

Since 2008, a group of Mediterranean citizens have committed to work towards the emergence of a Mediterranean community of peoples. In order to do so, they launched the development of a Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly. In this first step, they elaborated a founding text, basis of this Founding Charter.

The process is founded on the democratic values of freedom, peace, respect for cultural diversity and environmental responsibility. It aims to favour the emergence of a common voice and a common citizens' action, thanks to permanent communication using novel tools and methods.

This initiative, which is complementary to other existing undertakings, nevertheless rests entirely on one observation: it is mainly through the action and involvement of citizens, both men and women, that a united and positive "community of destiny" will be set up in the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly is not limited to the select few. On the contrary, this collective approach needs to bring together and, even better, to gain the support of a large number of people, from all strands of society.

Common observations

Despite the complexity of the Mediterranean reality, we, Mediterranean Citizens, have nonetheless decided to collectively establish a series of general observations, to which we all strongly agree.

- Although the Mediterranean lacks unity as a region and on the political level, it is *de facto* a region in the historical, human, commercial, cultural, social and environmental sense. This reality is important and deserves to be recalled and put forward. **Indeed, it has been forgotten**, particularly after the Second World War and the development of strong transatlantic axis and of the European Union just north of the Mediterranean. The integration into the EU of a number of countries of the North-Eastern shore has also contributed to this. These regional or political integrations have turned some Mediterranean countries away from their own region for a long time.
- **Attempts to set up entities** to the South and East of the Mediterranean have obviously failed.
- There is a **strong contradiction** between the free movement of goods and capital on the one hand, and the restrictions imposed on the movement of people on the other hand.
- The emergence of tensions between religious communities is a preoccupying reality.
- **The Balkans**, for their part, are experiencing difficulties due to economic and political transition, or due to ethnic or minority conflicts. Some find themselves isolated, others refuse isolation. It is impossible to know exactly how citizens in these particular countries - as in all countries on the Mediterranean shore - will accept and experience this double membership: Europe on the one hand and the Mediterranean on the other.
- Lastly, it is obvious that relations between the countries in the region are developed to different degrees and are more often bilateral than multilateral.

We understand that a Mediterranean approach in these conditions is complex, even difficult. **However, we firmly believe that it is absolutely necessary.**

Main challenge and strategic orientations

The main challenge is to build up a community of Mediterranean peoples. To reach this objective, we must first define the main **strategic orientations** to follow.

We think that today it is necessary to:

- **Work towards a shared and concerted governance, adapted to the Mediterranean region.** The aim is obviously not to impose a particular governance model that already exists and that would not be adapted to the Mediterranean region. All elements of the Mediterranean communities must contribute to the definition and conception of a model that would respect differences while making common action and reflection possible.
- **Strive to break the isolation** of countries that are still too confined within their national boundaries, or excluded for economic and political reasons – particularly in the South and East of the Mediterranean.
- **Contribute to overcoming mutual fears** and to bringing back a sense of human, political, cultural, environmental and economic unity to the Mediterranean region.

Bringing about these changes in a sustainable and concerted manner will only be possible if Citizens of the Mediterranean region take action to make their voice heard and contribute freely to the emergence of a common voice and a common citizens' action. Our approach will of course take into account the various initiatives¹ of a number of States, parliamentary and non-governmental institutions that strive to create an area of sustainable peace, development, solidarity and shared prosperity.

2. OBJECTIVES

As of today, the Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly wishes to work towards the following objectives:

- Contribute to building a sustainable Mediterranean area of peace, development, solidarity and shared prosperity between its peoples. By asking the question “What kind of Mediterranean do we want?”, we aim to promote the involvement of citizens within a new political, economic and social structure for the Mediterranean basin.
- Take part in the emergence of a new governance, truly based on dialogue and sharing, in the Mediterranean area.
- Act in favour of economic and political integration at the regional level, thus enabling certain populations to break away from their confinement.

¹ Such as the Barcelona Process and the Mediterranean Union, the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, civil fora and regional social fora.



- Work towards overcoming mutual fears to give a sense of human, political, cultural, environmental and economic unity to a community of Mediterranean peoples once again.
- Help communities communicate with each other.

3. NATURE AND PRINCIPLES

A Citizens' Assembly is a collective action and intelligence process (hence the notion of assembly) that goes beyond the frame of traditional expertise (hence the notion of citizenship), aiming to produce proposals and new consensus elements.

The Mediterranean Citizen's Assembly is conceived as a place of permanent communication between communities of the Mediterranean basin, including all the elements that compose them. This is a long-term process that gathers different actors of society – citizens' movements, public or private institutions, firms, associations, trade unions, experts, universities, research centers, etc.

The Mediterranean Citizen's Assembly aims to help recreate a renewed citizenship, based on responsibility, communication and sharing.

A Citizens' Assembly is inspired by three principles:

- It mainly enables the identification of major changes and upcoming challenges;
- It aims to build up common perspectives, taking into account the geographical and socio-professional diversity of situations and points of view;
- It founds democracy on the identification of common values, interests, challenges and commitments: key elements of a true community, and the basis of "living together".

The Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly has no judicial status, it is foremost a process, not an institution. It is simultaneously:

- A common project;
- A vision: overcome powerlessness in order to understand and influence, through common efforts, realities that individuals alone cannot tackle because of the scale and complexity of these realities.
- A place to share initiatives, to reflect and learn together.

4. COMMON VALUES

The Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly (M.C.A.) is part of a **progressist and humanist vision** of the historical evolution of the Mediterranean as a whole, and of the entire world. This vision is based on **values of democracy**, freedom, solidarity, peace, respect of cultural diversity and environmental responsibility. This area cannot welcome people bringing ideas that contradict these common values and principles:

- The M.C.A. is pluralist through the identity and nature of the actors invited to participate in the dialogue, as well as through the philosophical, political or religious currents they represent;
- The M.C.A. favours an ethics of diversity and unity. Each member recognizes the particular qualities of other members. Together, the participants seek to manage the common challenges facing humanity in a sustainable and united way;
- Analyses of the past are never used to judge people or civilisations, the objective is to find perspectives for the future ;
- The M.C.A. does not replace the various cooperation structures that already exist. They are all necessary. The M.C.A. aims to create a means of communication that would foster the emergence of new forms of cooperation that would in turn find their own development methods, independently from the M.C.A. structure;
- The M.C.A. does not aim to build coalitions that would oppose third parties. On the contrary, it hopes that the discussions it brings about will also be useful to other interregional or global exchanges;
- The M.C.A. is based on the principle of citizenship: we must learn to consider ourselves and other human beings as full members of the immense human society.

Participants intervene in their personal capacities within the framework of the M.C.A. The M.C.A. is not a place for institutions to express their opinions: there are other structures for inter-institutional negotiations. When freedom of speech is incompatible with a person's institutional responsibilities, the M.C.A. will privilege actors that are experienced but are not under the obligation to preserve secrecy. The participants of the M.C.A. commit to:

- Making the M.C.A. an open, tolerant and welcoming structure ;
- Getting the M.C.A. going by making others know about it and promoting it in their respective circles;
- Sharing experience and developing close bonds with the other participants;
- Respecting the working methods adopted of a common accord;
- Accepting that their participation in the M.C.A. be made public.

5. WORKING METHOD

The Mediterranean Citizens' Assembly

The Mediterranean Citizen's Assembly will first draw up a list of common observations, and define a common vision and perspective as regards the challenges of the XXI century.

The second step will be to discuss the different perspectives and decide on the priorities to follow, on common strategies and concrete proposals - which could namely help to define the orientation of political actions.

In accordance with our idea of the elements that compose society, the participants of these meetings will mostly come from the social, professional and cultural sectors of the Mediterranean basin.

The Mediterranean Coordination

This organ is composed of non-profit civil society organisations that provide the necessary human and material resources and have a certain fund-raising capacity. It is responsible for development, follow-up and political and executive coordination.

The members of the Mediterranean coordination must respect the spirit and ethics of the Founding Charter. They must make sure that all other participants abide by it.

The information system of the M.C.A. must ensure the transparency of the activities of the Mediterranean Coordination. The Mediterranean Coordination is responsible for fund-raising, and for ensuring a transparent and quality management of the structure.

Mediterranean coordination is articulated around five main geographical areas: the northwestern shore (Spain, France, Italy, Malta and Portugal), the northeastern shore (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Slovenia), the eastern shore (Turkey and Syria), the southeastern shore (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine) and the southwestern shore (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia)

The Council

An advisory Council has been set up to promote this undertaking. Its composition must reflect the diversity of the Mediterranean.

It is composed of volunteers from the Mediterranean region and from diverse socio-professional backgrounds. Members of the Council are renowned for their efforts towards the Mediterranean area.

Local Mediterranean Citizens' Circles

This initiative also aims to promote and create Local Mediterranean Citizens' Circles in the different countries of the region.

Conceived as open and permanent places for dialogue between citizens, they exchange ideas (through workshops, round table discussions), and collectively elaborate and assess proposals aiming to contribute to the emergence of new economic, social, cultural and environmental policies.

All citizens can take part in these Circles on the condition that they agree with the principles of the Founding Charter and commit to abide by them.

Funding

The budget of the M.C.A is defined by the coordination. Sources of funding are both private and public, which will cover the activity programme of the M.C.A and its development.

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