

## **The Tarragona Declaration for Dialogue and Cooperation between the Euro-Mediterranean Universities**

The Tarragona Declaration was drafted in the framework of the **Mediterranean University Forum** (Tarragona, 2-3 June 2005). The Forum was organized by : Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, 07/2005, in collaboration with : **Jean Monnet Project** and the **European Commission Education and Culture**

### **Preamble**

It is now ten years since the beginning of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (the Barcelona Process), which established a wide framework of political, economic and social relations between the member states of the European Union and the Mediterranean member countries, and the time has come to reflect critically on how it has developed and decide how to move ahead, with a new shared vision and a new plan of action, towards the construction of a Mediterranean area of sustained and sustainable progress. In this process, the universities must take a leading role, generating, reviewing and socializing knowledge to prepare men and women to cope effectively and efficiently with the challenges of the future.

At the beginning of June 2005, the Mediterranean University Forum was held in Tarragona. Rectors and lecturers gathered together to debate the perspectives of the Euro-Mediterranean area and the role that the universities had to play. The event was organized by the URV, the public university of the south of Catalonia, Spain, with the support of funding from the European Union's Jean Monnet programme, which had been awarded to the URV Group of Research on Gender, Interculturality and Mediterranean Cultural Studies. This occasion counted with the presence of the International Association of Universities (IAU), the European University Association (EUA), the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the Mediterranean European Institute (IEMed).

The first version of the Tarragona Declaration was subject to discussion and improvement during the Mediterranean University Forum, and it was signed by the 32 attending universities, representing 17 countries.

This Declaration has been published in the official languages of the University Forum, and we hope and trust that very soon it shall be published in all the languages of the Mediterranean basin. The Official text in *Pdf* format is available online at [www.unimedforum.net](http://www.unimedforum.net)

## The Tarragona Declaration

The Rectors and representatives of the Universities at the meeting of the **Mediterranean University Forum** in Tarragona, 2-3 June 2005, have agreed to the following **Declaration**:

- 1. The Barcelona Conference in November 1995 was a challenge and a historical opportunity for the people of the 25 member states of the European Union and the 10 partners of the Mediterranean area. The «Barcelona Process», initiated by the Declaration of 1995, the Valencia Action Plan and the decisions taken by the Euro Med Committee and the Conference of Ministers, along with the Neighbourhood Policy launched by the EU, sketched out a complex programme of Euro-Mediterranean «co-development» in the fields of economy, politics, culture, environment and security. The governments have resolved to encourage dialogue among the cultural traditions of the region, to disseminate a culture of human rights and democratic citizenship and to promote the sustainable development of scientific and technological exchange. It was clear from the beginning that such a project goes far beyond intergovernmental ties, and necessarily involves the education systems and civil society.*
- 2. Nonetheless, of the three approaches proposed by the Barcelona Declaration (politics and security, economy and finance, and human and culture) the latter in particular has not yet achieved the envisaged results. At this stage, university participation in the construction of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership appears to be very necessary and urgent, given that the most consistent obstacles to the completion of this process are also of a cultural nature. The work of the Advisory group appointed by Romano Prodi in 2003, the development of European projects and the Euro-Mediterranean University network and the creation of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation in Alexandria in 2004 are only the first steps of this process. A long-term strategy should be drawn up and coordinated together with the institutions on a national and community level in line with the conclusions of the 7th Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Luxembourg, 30-31 May 2005). At the same time, we should be able to promote from the start, in the short and medium term, examples of good practice for sustainable cooperation in the fields of research and education.*
- 3. The EU universities are aware that the Mediterranean issue is one of the priorities if the political and cultural future of Europe is to be defined. They are interested in developing a dynamic and functional concept of inter-university cooperation that matches the growth in efficiency and competitiveness within the European Higher Education system.*

*They can make a valid contribution for the partner countries to acquire a variety of skills necessary for their economic, social and institutional development. The universities of the partner countries not only expect the Barcelona Process and its outcome to improve economic and political relations, but also to increase cultural and technological exchange. They can contribute to the renewal of the European university system by encouraging the great cultural traditions and providing academic institutions of great prospective growth.*

4. *The fields in which Euro-Mediterranean cooperation is most urgent are numerous: e.g. pure and applied scientific research, economics, communication, medicine, agriculture, ecological security, institutional democratisation, and capacity building and language learning. Collaboration among universities has a key role in the promotion of Information Communication Technology (ICT), distance learning and lifelong learning.*
5. *The Euro-Mediterranean universities declare that they are particularly interested in promoting the various components of «Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Heritage» (history, philosophy, religious studies, archaeology, languages, literature, law, cultural tourism, environmental and cultural heritage protection, etc.), and pay particular attention to both their diversity and the humanistic roots shared by all the Mediterranean cultures.*
6. *Time has come to create a «Euro-Mediterranean area of Higher Education and Research», to contribute to the promotion of a knowledge society, to encourage collaboration and dialogue among educational institutions, to increase the efficiency of the institutions and the quality of teaching and research, to provide even greater non discriminatory education and to further involve civil society in a knowledge society. More specifically, a “Higher Education Network” should be constructed, consisting of universities and research centres in the Mediterranean and supported by the community, national and regional political institutions of the countries involved, so as to foster:*
  - *The development of the competencies, by means of joint research programmes and teaching and training programmes for academic, technical and administrative staff.*
  - *The increase of youth employment in sectors of high levels of cultural knowledge, by means of training and pilot initiatives of an entrepreneurial nature supported by the universities.*
  - *Mutual knowledge building among young students, academic staff and researchers, technical and administrative staff, through the increase of exchanges, mobility and communication.*
  - *Respect for the Euro-Mediterranean cultural and environmental heritage, by means of text translations, development of Euro-Mediterranean educational modules, twinning programmes and other training and dissemination activities.*
  - *Intercultural dialogue and reinforcement of human values deeply rooted in the countries involved, by involving civil society.*
  - *Academic freedom and independence of the Universities.*
7. *The Institutions at the meeting in Tarragona declare their intention to contribute to all the above-mentioned commitments by promoting agreements in the field of research, education and mobility among academics and students, the main lines of which shall be defined in an Action Plan.*

Tarragona, 3 June 2005

