

Resolution 1313 (2003)¹

Cultural co-operation between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Europe is made up of countries of different cultures and traditions. The unifying factor for the forty-four Council of Europe countries is their adherence to a set of values, namely democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as their determination to co-operate on a project for a joint future, while preserving their individual cultural specificities.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that the values defended by the Council of Europe are universal, and believes that the best reaction to globalisation is to use this phenomenon as a means of co-operating with non-European countries that share certain of these values, beginning with those which are closest to Europe.
3. Relations between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries – which have all signed the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – can and must be improved. Culture, including education, heritage and the arts, science, youth, sport and the media, is particularly suited to such co-operation.
4. There are economic, political, social and also cultural tensions in most parts of the world. Some incomprehension and misunderstandings exist. The Assembly rejects the facile explanation of such tensions as a clash of civilisations. Although there are indeed major cultural differences between different peoples, these differences should lead to dialogue, not confrontation.
5. Considering the secularisation of political institutions in Europe to be an achievement, the Assembly nevertheless recognises the positive contribution made to European civilisation by the various cultural and religious traditions, including Judaism, Islam and in particular Christianity.
6. The Council of Europe would not claim to have any final or comprehensive solutions to all of these problems. However, the Assembly is convinced that improved cultural relations between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries would provide the beginning of a solution to wider problems.
7. In order to be successful, the endeavour to improve relations must be backed with a strong political will in both Europe and the south Mediterranean countries. Many changes are still required.
8. For its part, the Assembly might conclude co-operation agreements with parliaments in south Mediterranean countries as a first step towards granting Observer status.
9. The Assembly resolves in particular:
 - 9.1. to develop contacts between European countries and the south Mediterranean countries in the fields of education, heritage and the arts, science, youth, sport and the media;
 - 9.2. to enhance cultural co-operation, particularly with parliamentarians from the south Mediterranean countries and with international organisations such as the cultural organisations of the Arab League (Alecso) and of the Islamic Conference (Isesco);

1. Assembly debate on 28 January 2003 (3rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 9626](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr de Puig, Spain). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 January 2003 (3rd Sitting).



9.3. to promote dialogue and cultural co-operation with other countries and regions which are close to Europe and share its history, in particular Lebanon.

10. The Assembly would like at the same time and in parallel to request the competent authorities in the member states of the Council of Europe and in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia to give priority to cultural co-operation between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries, and particularly:

in the field of education:

11. i. to co-operate in eliminating reciprocal stereotypes, prejudices and untruths from the different education systems by jointly revising school textbooks, particularly history books;

12. ii. to promote the learning of the Arabic language in Europe and European languages in the south Mediterranean countries, at all educational levels;

13. iii. to encourage the setting up of Arabic language and culture departments in European universities, and of departments for European languages and cultures in south Mediterranean universities;

14. iv. to establish the requisite mechanisms for student and teacher exchanges by developing and enlarging the Erasmus concept and facilitating visa arrangements;

15. v. to implement the requisite systems for recognising qualifications, from the secondary level onwards, with particular reference, for higher education, to the principles, goals and methods of the Bologna Process as well as the Council of Europe/Unesco Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention, ETS No. 165);

in the field of culture:

16. vi. to encourage the translation and publication of the fundamental works of Arab culture in Europe and of European cultural works in the south Mediterranean countries, including contemporary writers and studies on topical issues;

17. vii. to establish and develop contacts and exchanges among artists, with joint exhibitions and music, drama and film festivals;

18. viii. to facilitate contacts and encounters in the field of folk culture (folklore, gastronomy and traditional costumes);

19. ix. to co-operate in the field of migration policy in order to ensure that immigrants to Europe from south Mediterranean countries become genuine intermediaries between the cultures of the home and host countries;

in the field of religion:

20. x. to guarantee freedom of conscience and expression, exclude fundamentalism, promote respect for religious differences by providing all religions with equivalent conditions for development;

21. xi. to encourage encounters between different religious leaders by promoting ecumenism and opening the way to genuine inter-faith dialogue;

22. xii. foster the organisation of debates between intellectuals and theologians on the compatibility of religious practice with human rights, including the impact on women, as set out in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights;

23. xiii. to ensure that education systems provide basic knowledge of the various world religions; in the field of the media:

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24. xiv. to encourage public television corporations in the North and South to co-operate in developing television programmes and in the long term to study the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean television channel;

25. xv. to develop, in the public media, informative programmes on political, economic, social and cultural realities in order to ensure objective information in the North on Arab-Muslim societies and in the South on European societies;

26. xvi. to encourage co-operation between European and south Mediterranean journalists in the field of professional ethics;
27. xvii. to energise joint work on the Internet by creating shared sites and portals and virtual areas (universities, press rooms, enterprises, cultural fora) providing for immediate and ongoing exchange, and supporting the Galileo (satellite navigation) and Eumedis programmes, and expanding the Eureka programme;

in other fields:

28. xviii. to encourage co-operation and encounters between women from Europe and south Mediterranean countries on questions related to freedom, human rights and gender equality;
29. xix. to set up contact and co-operation networks between young people in various sectors of activity, such as parliamentarians, students from different levels and specialities, members of religious groups, artists, athletes, etc.;
30. xx. to study the possibilities for joint organisation of amateur or professional sports events, for example by restructuring and giving fresh impetus to the Mediterranean Games;
31. xxi. to encourage the involvement of southern countries in scientific research programmes run by governments, universities, laboratories, industries and enterprises, particularly those conducive to technology transfer;
32. xxii. to promote a twinning policy between European and south Mediterranean local authorities, with a view to close co-operation, particularly in the cultural fields;
33. xxiii. to encourage North-South tourist co-operation, with emphasis on cultural tourism, connect up the tourist promotion systems on both sides and foster the creation of cultural routes, programmes and exchanges;
34. xxiv. to support such Barcelona Process initiatives as Euro Med Heritage, Euro Med Audiovisual and Culture 2000, as well as the development of the Civil Forum, and set up broader co-operation bodies in this field by associating all Council of Europe countries with the south Mediterranean countries.