EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The background to the evaluation

In March 2004, the European Commission (DG EuropeAid, in association with DG Education and Culture and DG External Relations) instructed the European Consultants Organisation (ECO) to conduct an independent mid-term evaluation of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme (Euromed). The assessment was to cover the period from 2001 to 2003, thus partly encompassing both the first phase (1999-2001) and the second phase (2002-2004) of the programme. This evaluation would follow a previous mid-term evaluation conducted by Ecotec in August 2001.

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme (Euromed)

Euromed is the EU action programme set up to promote intercultural youth exchanges, volunteer service, and activities for youth workers between the countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The participating Mediterranean partner countries during 2001-2003 were: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Occupied Territories, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey.

The management of the programme has been sub-delegated by DG EuropeAid to the Youth Unit in DG Education and Culture, in collaboration with the Technical Assistance Office (TAO). In the period between 2000 and 2003, two new structures were established. The first was the SALTO Euromed Resource Centre (SALTO resource centre) for training in all aspects of the programme including project design. The second was the Covenant with the Council of Europe for training on Euromed values. A third structure, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform (EMYP), replaced the former Euro-Mediterranean Youth Forum with the goal of promoting networking among the youth associations.

The total number of projects funded during the period between 2001 and 2003 was 451. The direct beneficiaries of the programme between 2001 and 2003 were 254 youth and civil associations (134 from the EU and 120 from MEDA). As an indication of the size of the programme, during the 2001 to 2002 period 8194 young people participated in the programme (4008 from the EU and 4186 from the MEDA countries). The overall budget for the period covered by the evaluation was approximately 14 million euro.

The objectives, scope, and approach of the evaluation

This evaluation assesses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of Euromed in terms of achieving its general and specific objectives. Furthermore, this evaluation explores the strengths and weaknesses of Euromed, as well as the opportunities and main obstacles facing the programme. It places particular emphasis on issues of regional and national coordination, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, and the SALTO resource centre. Findings and recommendations are arranged under the sections of relevance, effectiveness, efficacy, impact, and sustainability of the programme.
The evaluation was carried out between April and September 2004 using research, fieldwork, evaluation workshops, and face-to-face interviews in nine MEDA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and the Occupied Territories). It also encompassed a stakeholder meeting in Brussels with over 70 participants from Europe and the Mediterranean. The evaluation draws on data from personal contact with over 140 MEDA youth associations. It is additionally supported by on-line questionnaires launched on the web portal of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform. Given that the programme has funded 120 MEDA organisations from 2001 to 2003, the research sample accessed provides a solid and credible base for findings and recommendations for the new phase of the programme, particularly for the MEDA region.

The mid term evaluation takes into consideration relevant policy documentation on the past and current Commission’s actions related to youth policy as well as the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. This includes regional strategy papers and the White Paper on Youth amongst others. It also takes into account the new generation of Education, and Training and Youth programmes, which run from 2007.

More specifically, the evaluation focused on the following major issues:

Relevance
1. Pertinence of the objectives and actions of the programme
2. Adequacy of the intervention mechanisms
3. Coherence of Euromed with the objectives of the third chapter of the Barcelona process and the objectives of the Youth programme
4. Appropriateness of the budget

Effectiveness
1. Roles and responsibilities of the programme structures
2. Procedures to select, manage, and disseminate projects
3. Effectiveness and coherence of the administrative management

Efficiency
1. Relationship between the inputs of the programme and the programme results

Impact
1. Level of participation and interest in the programme
2. Regional co-operation
3. Added value of the Euromed youth programme
4. Barriers affecting impact

Sustainability
1. Level of ownership of the programme
2. Role of training in sustainability of the programme
3. The critical mass of the programme
4. Contribution to cross-cutting issues

1 The evaluators responsible for the study are Judith Neisse and Esther Gelabert.
The Key Findings and Recommendations of the Evaluation

The Euromed programme has become the singularly most focussed regional instrument to promote youth intercultural dialogue within the Euro-Mediterranean area and to foster the development of the youth associative sector in the MEDA countries. Both these aspects are key strategic issues, given the current international political context and the emerging importance in several MEDA countries of creating a basis for a civil society in which the youth sector is at its core.

Euromed’s importance is due to the fact that it is the only programme to facilitate exchanges between the youth of countries that have, historically and traditionally, often been lacking in co-operation. In the long run, co-operation between youth organisations in these countries is likely to create broader regional links, change misconceptions and societal attitudes towards both EU and MEDA countries, and strengthen bilateral relationships.

The ‘bottom-up’ approach of the programme allows youth organisations to submit projects according to their specific interests and needs. In addition, this strategy allows a certain degree of independence, creativity, and diversity among the youth and civil organisations that participate. Furthermore, the programme fills a funding gap in MEDA countries that in general have marginal youth budgets and scarce support from other international donors.

➢ There is in general a consistency and complementarity between the objectives set by the concerned Directorates General for Euromed.

DG EuropeAid and DG Relex set up the political objectives of the programme, such as the development of civil society and democratisation. The youth related objectives such as intercultural dialogue are, for the most part, set by DG Education and Culture. Analysis of the programme reference documents shows there is in general a consistency and complementarily between the objectives set by both. However, translating these objectives into a coherent strategic action plan becomes a complex procedure between the several DGs involved. The central management of the programme should further foster careful coordination among Directorates General in the future.

The official texts, the basis for the legal framework for the Euromed youth programme, do not present operational objectives against which to measure the level of performance of the programme. Yet, these objectives partially appear as operational content, in the description of the programme actions.

**Recommendation 1**

The different implementation mechanisms (actions, including training) should be related to quantifiable objectives such as: number of beneficiaries, characteristics of target beneficiaries, types of projects, number of projects, and areas of intervention. Moreover, the aim of these objectives should be proportional to the funding allocated to achieving them. This will enable a better monitoring and assessment of the performance of the programme.
The needs of the beneficiaries are in line with the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme.

The needs of the beneficiaries of the Mediterranean region are in line with the objectives of Euromed. This is the case for all the programme objectives, with the exception of the creation of national youth councils in MEDA countries. The evaluation found that the political will in MEDA countries is insufficiently developed to support the creation of these councils.

However, this matching between the needs of the beneficiaries and the objectives of the programme is not optimal. The current programme is not based on a recent analysis of the beneficiaries’ needs. This is particularly important given the changing political and social scenario that the Mediterranean partner countries are encountering.

**Recommendation 2**

**To launch a needs analysis in the youth sector.**

This should not be restricted to youth associations participating in the programme but should be extended to policy-makers in order to optimise the matching between the real needs of the youth sector (youth trainers, workers, and leaders) in the MEDA countries and the objectives of the programme.

The implementation of the Euromed training objectives has been successful; but these have been only partially implemented during the evaluation phase.

The SALTO resource centre and the National Coordinators (NCs), the main training providers during this evaluation period, have focused their activity on the programme objective of training for Euromed youth work, including the design of successful proposals. This objective has been effectively met.

However, the programme objective of “supporting youth organisations in capacity building and in youth policies” has not yet been sufficiently tackled. This objective is particularly important given the increasing sensitivity of the MEDA countries in developing political youth agendas.

**Recommendation 3**

Euromed should strengthen the current training strategy to optimally cover the key objective of “developing capacity building at the level of youth structures and policies”.

If properly set, the strategy will contribute to addressing the present gap in professional training in the youth sector of the MEDA region.
The thematic priorities of the programme should enhance its influence on the content of the projects.

Active participation in civil society, Strengthening of citizenship, Place of women in society, Fight against racism and xenophobia, Minority rights, and Heritage and environmental protection are the thematic priorities of Euromed and their influence on the content of the projects should be enhanced. With the goal of strengthening the content of the proposals, it would be of interest to make them a binding selection criterion.

Recommendation 4

More emphasis needs to be placed on promoting the Euromed thematic priorities at the pre-proposal stage.

This task could be undertaken by the NCs, the National Agencies (NAs), and the training structures. Additionally, bearing in mind the goal to increase the quality of the proposals, the User’s Guide should state the importance of these priorities in a clearer way. To ensure their impact, a binding rule could be developed to take them fully into consideration as a selection criterion in the selection process.

Recommendation 5

The current age range of the programme (15 to 25 years) does not fully correspond to the age range of young Mediterranean people available for project activities.

This is particularly but not exclusively the case concerning the European Voluntary Service (EVS). In many MEDA countries, this age group has constraints imposed upon it that include military service and the university cycle, which cannot be interrupted. Consequently, they are unavailable, particularly for actions that demand a longer period of participation, such as the European Voluntary Service.

Recommendation 6

Gender equality is a general objective and a priority for Euromed and yet gender is not introduced as a binding criterion for selection of projects.

Although participation of young women is both an objective and a priority of the programme, proposers have not been asked to consider it formally where appropriate in their proposals.

Proposers should be asked whether and how their projects contain a gender component. Gender balance should be introduced where appropriate as selection criteria for project proposals.
There has been a steady rise in participation in the programme over the evaluation period, particularly from MEDA countries.

The key political goal of the second phase of Euromed was achieving a greater balance between the number of successful project proposals funded from MEDA and from EU countries. This has been accomplished.

Indeed, in earlier years, the number of approved projects from the EU has outweighed those from MEDA countries. However, the percentage of successful projects from MEDA countries has gone up from 33% in 2001 to 48% in 2003.

An analysis of the programme participation statistics indicates a success in participation in the Actions of Youth Exchange (Action 1) and Support Measures (Action 5). Both show a steady rise in participation over the evaluation period (number of applications from MEDA rose from 107 in 2001 to 157 in 2002).

The European Voluntary Service (Action 2) needs to be strengthened.

The last evaluation of Euromed found that the European Voluntary Service (Action 2) had a low participation rate. This has seen only a slight improvement during this evaluation period, despite some increase in promotional activity. The evaluation finds this action still pertinent for the MEDA region. However, its implementation encounters problems in the cultural and practical preparation of volunteers; the description of tasks to be undertaken; the support structures; and the accurate matching of the volunteers with positions available.

Recommendation 7

More promotion of this Action should be undertaken at the NC level, through specialised training seminars.

In order to regenerate participation in the European Voluntary Service, the upper age limit of programme participants should be raised to 30 years of age. As for the other problems, the European Voluntary Service needs additional guidelines for sending and hosting organisations as well as for beneficiaries. The NCs should undertake additional monitoring of host organisations and the volunteers.

The programme has generated the first generation of regional networks.

The formal and informal networking activities of the programme, such as project partnerships, contact-making seminars, and multilateral training to promote networking are resulting in the emergence of the first generation of regional networks. An appropriate mechanism has to be put in place to give it the support it needs. The current programme channel to select and fund regional networks is to submit proposals at the NA level of the EU countries.
Recommendation 8

A stronger strategic approach needs to be introduced to give support to the emerging regional networks.

The evaluation demonstrates that network projects need to be selected and funded at the EU central level. This will ensure the balanced development of the networks at this level and their independence from national considerations. Additionally, it opens the possibility for Mediterranean partners to apply as promoters of networks.

- Overall, Euromed achieved a satisfactory level of performance and it has significantly improved its effectiveness during the evaluation period.

The programme has strengthened its management from 2001 to 2003. Today, it has reached satisfactory levels of performance in the administrative management of the programme.

Two main outcomes regarding structures have been achieved:

1. The incorporation and/or consolidation of the role of new actors into the programme (the SALTO Resource Centre and the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, as well as the Covenant with the Council of Europe).
2. The decentralisation of programme selection and management by the National Agencies, which started in 2003.

In this second phase the MEDA structures have had their management strengthened and have extended to almost the entire Mediterranean region.

The evaluation finds the role of the NCs critical to the functioning of the programme at the country level. The NCs actively influence the number and quality of proposals submitted in their countries.

At the EU level, the decentralisation process implies increased programme efficiency, but at the expense of a reduction in the number of projects funded.

The geographical coverage of NCs in MEDA is now complete with the exception of Syria.

Recommendation 9

A NC should be set up in Syria. This would greatly enhance Syria's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme.

- Consolidation of the role of the Mediterranean National Coordinators.

During this phase, a consolidation of the role of the NCs has taken place with the support of several programme mechanisms such as the successful twinning scheme and job
shadowing. However, several MEDA countries experience a low level of communication between the EU Delegation and the NC.

**Recommendation 10**

The exchange of information and communication between the NCs and the Delegations needs to be improved in order to forward the programme objectives.

- The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform has established the basis of an effective networking tool for the youth organisations of the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, through its web portal, has achieved high dynamism in its first year of operation, as the figures of registered organisations and hits to the website indicate. It provides the expected support in partner search for Euromed.

Despite this success, the management structure of the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform created in 2003 does not represent the target groups of the Mediterranean countries. The Platform aims to incorporate in the steering committee national councils or similar organisations but these types of institutions are not in existence in MEDA countries.

**Recommendation 11**

In the absence of National Councils, the Platform should develop an alternative representation from the MEDA countries in the steering activities.

- The administrative procedures of the programme have increased in efficiency.

The efficiency of the administrative procedures has increased. Their duration has been shortened particularly in the areas of selecting projects and issuing contracts. This is partly due to stopping the inter-service consultation among the DGs that used to take place in selecting projects. This shortened selection procedure has had a direct positive effect: beneficiaries gain more time to prepare for the project since contracts are signed earlier.

**Recommendation 12**

To monitor the appropriate application of the 45-day rule regarding payments.

Generally, the impression is that the European rules do not create big problems when confronted with the country rules and that the people or organisations concerned find ways of solving them.

- The decentralised process has improved the conditions for European project promoters.

The process of decentralisation was qualified as positive by the NAs regarding their own work of guidance, management, and selection for the programme. However, the NAs and
NCs agree that the decentralisation is suffering from a deficient flow of information to the NCs/NAs concerning project partners and selected projects and their outcomes in their countries.

The decentralisation of the selection and funding processes for EU countries that took place in 2003 has created a problem of information flow between the NCs and NAs. The main instances of this have resulted in the respective NA and NC not knowing that their nationals are participating in projects. There is a need to catalogue project partnerships on a central database and pass it on to the NAs and NCs.

➢ **During this phase, the information activities of the programme have improved both at the central and decentralised levels. However, the strategy needs to be reviewed and enhanced to promote further access and strengthen the visibility of the programme beyond the youth sector.**

As a result from the previous evaluation, initiatives, such as the issuing of a Euromed brochure, were put forward at the central level to improve the identity and the visibility of the programme. The NCs have also progressively improved their information and dissemination strategy.

However, the current sources of information on Euromed are still fragmented, and important information, such as the possibility of submitting applications directly to Brussels without the intermediation of the NC, is not available in any of the programme brochures or on official websites.

The visibility and access to Euromed beyond the youth sector remains low – for example, in civil associations, universities, and government structures such as ministries in the MEDA countries.

**Recommendation 13**

The Programme would benefit from strengthening the overall Euromed information dissemination strategy, as well as from an improvement in the efficiency of the information strategy at the MEDA country level.

Guidelines for a strategic information approach should be set at the central management level and distributed to the NCs. This should include producing materials in at least the more widely spoken languages of the region, such as Arabic and all relevant information on the programme (application deadlines, training seminars, etc.) should be published in the local newspapers.

➢ **The programme is relatively efficient.**

The second phase of Euromed has experienced a budget increase of 40% compared to the first phase of the programme.

A comparison between the amount committed and spent for the different actions of the programme show that the envisaged budget for Action 2 (European Voluntary Service) has
been overestimated for the whole period, since the number of projects approved has remained way below the estimate. This could be an important indicator for the problems this action has encountered and confirms the assertions of beneficiaries about their mobility difficulties and their availability in the eligible age range.

An analysis of the number of MEDA projects funded by the programme shows that it has risen in the period between 2002 and 2003 from 58 to 88 selected projects, a close to 50% increase. In parallel to the increase of the number of projects, there has, in general, been a tendency towards a decrease of the amount funded per project. This trend is evident for the whole period of the evaluation, independent of the action or the year.

Finally, the following figures indicate the size, impact, and expenditure of the programme in the MEDA region: 120 organisations from the MEDA zone benefit from Euromed grants and about 10,000 MEDA beneficiaries could enjoy the benefits of the programme. This means that the average amount per MEDA beneficiary is estimated at 4000 euro.

**Recommendation 14**

Part of the initial budget planned for projects for the EVS should be reorientated to training and awareness campaigns about this action.

- Impact has been achieved at three levels: that of the individual, the youth managers and leaders, and the youth associations.

Young individuals have gained new visions, personal assertiveness, skills, and better understanding of “the other”. In several cases, young people have indicated that the programme has been a means to find out their rights as individuals.

The design and implementation of a project proposal has provided hands-on experience in working in a diverse multicultural environment. The direct effect of the programme has been the facilitation of networking at local and regional levels. It also has increased the capacity to raise awareness on youth issues.

Informal learning and participatory approaches to youth work, and new concepts and practices for MEDA youth organisations have been introduced through the SALTO resource centre.

The level of South-South co-operation, considered by the Commission as an important tool to promote understanding in the social and cultural field, has increased during this period. The co-operation between youth organisations of the Euro-Mediterranean region that is fostered by Euromed is likely in the long run to create broader regional links, change misconceptions and societal attitudes in both EU and MEDA countries, and to strengthen bilateral relationships.

- During the second phase of the programme, Euromed has achieved a critical mass.

A total of 256 associations have been active in the programme from 2001 to 2003. Of these 136 were from the EU and 120 were from the MEDA countries. This critical mass has
been achieved with the support of the NCs and the SALTO resource centre. The evaluation, therefore, envisages a reasonable level of sustainability of the programme, with balanced participation of associations both from MEDA and the EU. The level of sustainability depends also on the support of MEDA and EU youth public authorities.

**Recommendation 15**

The Commission should encourage the intensification of MEDA local authorities’ support to the NCs and their activities beyond the current agreement.

It is also important to ensure that most of the working time of the NCs is devoted to the management of Euromed.

**Conclusion**

The Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme has become the singularly most focussed and successful regional instrument to promote youth intercultural dialogue within the Euro-Mediterranean area and to foster the development of the youth associative sector in the MEDA countries. Both the aspects of intercultural dialogue and development are key strategic issues, given the current international political context and the emerging importance in several MEDA countries of creating a basis for a civil society in which the youth sector is at its core. Furthermore, the programme fills a funding gap in MEDA countries that in general have marginal budgets for the youth sector, and scarce support from other international donors.

The ‘bottom-up’ approach of the programme allows youth organisations to submit projects according to their specific interests and needs, within the current programme framework. Additionally, the strategy of the programme allows a certain degree of independence, creativity, and diversity among the participating youth and civil organisations.

During its second phase, Euromed has achieved important results including:

- A balance in participation between the number of MEDA and EU youth associations in the programme
- Training in Euromed youth work for a significant number of youth leaders and trainers from the countries of both the EU and MEDA
- A satisfactory level of performance of the programme structures: the SALTO resource centre, the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, and the Technical Assistance Office
- Efficient administrative procedures primarily concerning the selection process and the issuing of contracts.

During the second phase of the programme, Euromed has achieved a critical mass. A total of 256 associations have been active in the Programme from 2001 to 2003. Of these, 136 were from the EU and 120 were from the MEDA countries. The programme experiences a genuine commitment and enthusiasm from the participants and youth leaders. Moreover,
the formal and informal networking activities of the programme, such as project partnerships, contact-making seminars, and multilateral training to promote networking, are resulting in the emergence of the first generation of regional networks.

Highlighted in this evaluation are a number of elements that need fine-tuning to further improve the performance and the impact of the programme. These include an improved coordination among the multiple programme actors, a more efficient information and communication strategy providing more emphasis in the thematic priorities of the programme, strengthening Action 2 (the European Voluntary Service), and a revised approach to training for the next phase.

**Overall Recommendation**

*Given the short-term results and the expected long-term impact, and taking into consideration all the above, it is strongly recommended that the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Programme be continued.*