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THE EUROMEDITERRANEAN INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION PROCESS: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS A PARALLEL EXAMPLE

S. Picchioni*

* Institute for Industrial Promotion, Rome, Italy. E-mail: picchioni@ipi.it

SUMMARY – The Euromediterranean partnership on industry was launched in 1996 through the **1st Euromediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers** organised in Brussels by the Italian Presidency of the EU with the support of the Institute for Industrial Promotion that, since then, has been following all the political and technical issues related to the Euromediterranean industrial partnership on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Industry. The objective of the Conference was to define an industrial cooperation policy at bilateral and regional level aimed at fostering the economic and industrial development of the Mediterranean partner countries, at promoting foreign direct investments in the Region and the North-South and South- South exchange. In order to make regional cooperation more effective and incisive, as well as to follow up to the work carried out during the Italian Presidency of the EU, last October the Italian government organised the **5th Euromediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers** that was held in Caserta. The Conference marked an important moment to revitalise the political dialogue on Euromediterranean cooperation, stressing the importance of a common engagement of public authorities and the private sector. Despite the difficulties met in these years and the widespread perception that just a few progress had been made, the Conference gave a strong sign of renewed interest and confidence towards the Euromediterranean industrial cooperation and the Commission has given immediate implementation to some of the actions envisaged in the final declaration.

Key words: industrial cooperation, Euromediterranean, Caserta

First of all, I would like to thank Landau and the organisers for having invited us here to briefly report on the evolution of the Euromediterranean industrial partnership in the latest years, hoping that similar initiatives at political and technical level can be activated also in the water management sector, that, as for industry, is one of the sixth issues included in the economic and financial chapter of the Euromediterranean process.

As you will know, this process was launched by the European Commission in 1995 in Barcelona, with the aim to rationalise and intensify the relationships between the European union and the 12 Countries of the Southern Mediterranean Basin.

In particular, the Euromediterranean partnership on industry was launched the following year through the **1st Euromediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers** organised in Brussels by the Italian Presidency of the EU, with the support of the Institute for Industrial Promotion that, since then, has been following all the political and technical issues related to the Euromediterranean industrial partnership on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Industry. The objective of the Conference was to define an industrial cooperation policy at bilateral and regional level aimed at fostering the economic and industrial development of the Mediterranean partner countries, at promoting foreign direct investments in the Region and the North-South and South- South exchange.

In order to follow up concretely to the recommendations of the Ministers, an *ad hoc* Working Group¹ was established with the tasks of coordinating and monitoring the industrial cooperation initiatives at regional level – i.e. those addressed to the whole Countries of the area.

Among these initiatives, two in particular can be mentioned as good practice for the regional cooperation: the “Euromediterranean Network of Investment Promotion Agencies” (ANIMA) and the Euromed Market project on the Instruments and Mechanisms for the Euromediterranean Market Promotion, that includes a number of training workshops. Both these projects, that are still ongoing, are financed through the Meda Programme, which is currently at its second edition and that envisages an overall financial coverage of 5,350 million Euro for the period 2000-2006.

In order to make regional cooperation more effective and incisive, as well as to follow up to the work carried out during the Italian Presidency of the EU, last October the Italian government organised the **5th Euromediterranean Conference of Industry Ministers** that was held in Caserta.

The Conference marked an important moment to revitalise the political dialogue on Euromediterranean cooperation, stressing the importance of a common engagement of public authorities and the private sector.

Moreover, all the Mediterranean partner countries signed the **Euromediterranean Charter for Enterprise**, that represents a common framework of reference to develop effective policies to foster the competitiveness and growth of the area.

Ministers have also delegated the Working Group on “Euromediterranean Industrial Cooperation” to implement a precise future work programme on enterprise policy that envisages, in addition to a continuous monitoring on the Charter implementation and the exchange of good practices at regional level, a deep examination of the future cooperation projects for the private sector development.

Among these, sub-regional cooperation programmes are most important, in that they represent an extremely flexible type of intervention and they suppose a strong interest and commitment by the Countries involved in the implementation of the project, thus overcoming the logic of donation aids.

Briefly, despite the difficulties met in these years and the widespread perception that just a few progress had been made, the Conference gave a strong sign of renewed interest and confidence towards the Euromediterranean industrial cooperation. The Commission has given immediate implementation to some of the actions envisaged in the final Declaration.

¹ This Working Group on “Euromediterranean Industrial Cooperation” meets at least once a year. It is chaired by the DG Enterprise of the European Commission and it is made of representatives of the Ministries responsible for Industry, Governmental Agencies for economic and industrial policies and representatives of the private sector (UNICE and UMCE)