

Is there a Distinctive Mediterranean Entrepreneurial Collective Action?

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ABSTRACT

Our question about the distinctiveness of Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action stems from the inadequacy of its certain capacities and limits to its independent development. The following paper aims in identifying the reasons of this inadequacy, and explaining how this action, embodied in BusinessMed, is articulated to the European governance in order to become more apt and effective.

Keywords: *Mediterranean, Entrepreneurial Collective action, UNICE, Euro-Mediterranean partnership, UMCE*

Administration

In her research on "Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean", Dorthée Schmid questions the "distinctiveness of Mediterranean entrepreneurs" in cultural terms and gives an overview about the "business tradition" and "State-businessmen" relations within Southern-Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries.¹ We find that Schmid's questioning on the "distinctiveness" of Mediterranean entrepreneurs is a relevant research objective, given the industrial and economical tardiness of the region. However, in this paper, we will not make interrogations on "when" and "how" a different, original entrepreneurship culture and practices have been formed in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. Accepting the particularities of the region as given facts, we use the term "distinctive" as a criteria for evaluating the maturity and self-sufficiency of Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action, especially vis-à-vis more experienced and institutionalized European one. In this sense, we do not use the term "distinctive" for pointing to the specific characteristics of Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action but to its structural and institutional dimension. Our aim is to analyze in which way we can distinguish the entrepreneurial collective action of the both sides of the Mediterranean, what are the overlapping elements of their structures, what are the convergences and divergences in their activities, and especially in what way

¹ Dorothee Schmid, "Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean: An Amateur Approach to Regional Identity", in Isabel Schafer, Jean-Robert Henry (eds.), *Mediterranean Politics from Above and Below* (Berlin: Nomos, 2009), p. 416.

the European actors direct and influence the entrepreneur collective action in the Mediterranean.

With this aim, we will first make an introductory discussion about the term "collective action", including a presentation of political conditions and actor motivations for its emergence. Secondly, we will emphasize the peculiarities of Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action institutionalized by BusinessMed and the inspirational effect of European collective action organization, BusinessEurope, for its activities. Thirdly we will focus on relations and (actual and potential) cooperation between euro-Mediterranean entrepreneurs, and the leverage effect of BusinessEurope for BusinessMed. Finally, the limits for a Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action and its dependence on BusinessEurope will be discussed.

1. The European entrepreneurial collective action as a model for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean business communities

The term "collective action" identifies a set of engagement, mobilization, representation and negotiation compartments, through which social interests are constituted and exercise their political influence.² These compartments are shaped according to the characteristics of the political regimes and the specific problems that certain groups face within these regimes. Four main factors are determinant in the way human groupings come into being with the purpose of representing their interests in political sphere and promoting them.³

- First comes the political opportunities, which can sometimes be static opportunity structures for certain groups for having access to decision making, or can sometimes be changing political environments;

- Second, mobilizing structures, both formal organizations and the social networks of everyday life;

- Third, the frames, both cultural constants that orient participants and those they construct themselves for creating a common understanding of the situation they are in. In a collective action, participants frame their claims, opponents and identities. It is a dynamic process, not just a simple expression.

- Fourth, repertoires of contention, the means by which collective actions vary radically from one political regime to the next. Various types of

² Richard Balme, Didier Chabanet, "Action collective et gouvernance de l'Union européenne", in Richard Balme, Didier Chabanet, Vincent Wright (eds.), *L'action collective en Europe* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 2002), p. 27.

³ Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 14-15.

governments foster various types of interest representation/promotion compartments.⁴

Social actors engage in collective action and form interest groups with an objective of pushing for "direct democracy" and targeting the institutions and actors of representative democracy, which mean national parliaments and governments. Their main expectation is to exercise a certain influence on these institutions to assure that they regulate social relations and formulate policies in conformity with their specific interests. Although the power of Nation-State and its institutions has not disappeared, social, cultural and economic changes have begun to transform the structures of political opportunities. It is possible to talk about a shift on the locus of political power, both internally and externally. Internally, it is possible to talk about a partial shift from "elected" politicians to policy implementers and their social partners.⁵ Externally, there has been a shift in the locus of institutional power from the national to supranational and regional levels with the increasing importance of international organizations (such as the World Trade Organization) and regional entities (such as the European Union). This process has been going in parallel to the increase of informal networks across borders: nongovernmental organization coalitions in the areas of human rights, the environment, and the peace; crime networks and multinational corporations. The power shift has not only been from nation-state to other actors, but also from politics to the market, with neoliberal economic policies increasing the power of economic actors and reducing the capacity of traditional state structures to control them⁶.

In this sense, the Mediterranean entrepreneurial collective action holds some specificities. First, in terms of creating a "collectivity", sharing a common view and frames for political contention seems improbable, due to the diversity that we see in terms of political culture and political regimes in

⁴ "Repertoires of contention", or the collective action repertoires are defined by Tilly as a model in which the accumulated experience of contenders interacts with the strategies of public authorities, to make a limited number of forms action more feasible, attractive, and frequent than many others which could, in principle, serve the same interests. See Charles Tilly, "Les origines du répertoire d'action collective contemporaine en France et en Grande Bretagne", *Vingtième Siècle* (Vol. 4, No. 4, 1999), p. 99.

Actions such as strikes, meetings, demonstrations, distribution of pamphlets, press conferences, press campaigns, and negotiations can be regarded as events constituting the repertoires of contention. See Michael Offerlé, *Sociologie des groupes d'intérêt*, (Paris: Montchrestien, 1998), pp. 101-103.

⁵ It is relevant to argue that even if there is not a definitive transfer of power, there is a continuum in the political process based on enhanced cooperation in policy making between politicians, bureaucrats and non political stakeholders interested in one given policy area.

⁶ For a reading on the "shift on the locus of power" see, Donatella della Porta and Sydney Tarrow, "Transnational Processes and Social Activism: An introduction", in Donatella della Porta and Sydney Tarrow (eds.), *Transnational Protest and Global Activism* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), pp. 1-2.

the region. Second, the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean is not yet a region where power shifts from authoritarian national political centers to supranational ones or from the politics to the market have been realized as within the European Union countries.⁷ However, the heterogeneous structure and authoritarian regimes did not prevent the entrepreneurs of the Southern-Eastern Mediterranean to engage in a regional collective action with the establishment of UMCE (Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises) under the influence of European organization then named UNICE (Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe). The members of the UMCE are TÜSIAD and TİSK (Turkey), FEI (Egypt), FSCC (Syria), UTICA (Tunisia), PFI (Palestine), CGEM (Morocco), CGEA (Algeria), ALI (Lebanon), OEB (Cyprus), MAI (Israel), JCI (Jordan), and two European observer members in Confindustria (Italy) and SEV (Greece).

Since its foundation UMCE organizes its activities as a projection of the UNICE. The organization defines itself as UNICE's Mediterranean interlocutor and also committed to the institutionalization of interactions between the members of both organizations. It engages itself to establish formal ties with the European business organizations and to facilitate exchanges between the European and Mediterranean business communities.⁸

In compliance with these commitments and expectations, the UNICE has had major effect on UMCE's activities. Before analyzing the relationship between the two organizations, it is possible to behold a logic of mimesis even in their names ("Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe" becomes "Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises"). Both organizations changed names after 2007, UNICE now being called as BusinessEurope and UMCE as BusinessMed.

- Like the names, the structures of the two organizations indicate the same logic. BusinessEurope constitutes a model for BusinessMed activities despite important economic divergences between Europe and the Southern/Eastern Mediterranean. Both organizations engage in same type of activities such as scientific research and analysis on economic issues carried out by same types of commissions or working groups. As a result of their

⁷ The authoritarian political environment surrounding the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean businessmen and their incapacity in advancing political demands have been analyzed in detail in the following academic works: Eric Gobe, *Les hommes d'affaires égyptiens et le pouvoir de l'Etat: libéralisation économique et perspectives sur la démocratisation dans l'Égypte de l'ouverture (1974-1994)* (PhD Thesis, Bibliothèque d'IEP d'Aix-en-Provence, 1996) ; Myriam Catusse, *L'entrée en politique des entrepreneurs au Maroc. Libéralisation économique et réforme de l'ordre politique* (PhD Thesis, Bibliothèque d'IEP d'Aix-en-Provence, 1999).

⁸ For the missions and objectives of UMCE, Ozan Serdaroğlu, "Euro-Turkish Business Cooperation Networks: The Example of TÜSIAD", in Isabel Schafer, Jean-Robert Henry (eds.), op. cit. in note 1, pp. 439-440.

internal activities, both organizations formulate policies to be transmitted to policy makers. When we consider the specificities of the business communities this kind of rapprochement between European and South/East Mediterranean entrepreneur organizations seem to have better chances of functioning compared to other civil society organizations. The distinctive character of business communities is that the economic space is sufficiently structured at international scale and differentiated from political space for permitting transnational networks that gets out of state control. These communities are successful in having an autonomous international action, which means their participants act according to a specific rationality that is of their own⁹. In this sense, the transnational cooperation between BusinessEurope and BusinessMed can be considered as an echo of this specific rationality in collective action and interest representation. Members of the two organizations act collectively and strategically to exercise a supranational influence in policy areas in which they have common stakes.

However, the objectives and reasons of mobilization behind the two cooperating business organizations are different. "European collective actions" emerge when certain groups are no more interested merely with national regulations but are also exposed to supranational ones formulated by supranational institutions. Such groups reframe their activities and form a regionalized common view on professional issues. As a result, they tend to find common solutions to their "Europeanized" problems and employ new political opportunities and collective action repertoires.¹⁰ BusinessEurope was founded in 1958 (as UNICE) in order to push for direct democracy at supranational level and pretend to have access to European decision making processes by opening a permanent interaction with European institutions. It is an official "social partner" of the EU and takes part in the formulation of certain policies in the areas of employment, improvement of working conditions and social protection and security systems.¹¹ In this partnership, European Commission retains a critical role: First, because it is very open to consultation from specific professional groups in technical aspects of European policies, second, because the organization has privileged ties with the Directorate Generals (DG) of the Commission, especially the DG Trade. As a result of this privileged access to European executive power, BusinessEurope undertakes efficient collective action with an aim in

⁹ This rationality originally stems from shared common standards of business techniques in management, production and marketing that are used to follow specific economic interests. Bertrand Badie, Marie-Claude Smouts, *Le retournement du Monde* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1999), pp. 80-81

¹⁰ For a reading on "europeanization of collective action" see, Emiliano Grossman, "L'Européanisation des structures de représentation des interest", in Emiliano Grossman, Sabine Saurugger (eds.), *Politique européenne: Les groupes d'intérêt et l'Union européenne* (Paris: Centre européen du Science Po, 2002) ; Balme, Chabanet, op. cit. in note 2.

¹¹ Maurice Barud, "L'UNICE et la politique sociale européenne, d'Amsterdam à Nice", *Chronique Internationale de l'IRES* (No. 65, 2000).

promoting the interests of its members and exercising a political influence for the creation of a business-friendly climate in Europe.¹² Moreover, before each European summit, the members' groups meet to discuss the European agenda and transmit their opinions to European political elites. BusinessEurope thus seeks to influence the great European debates according to its political goals.¹³ The organization helps European entrepreneurs to have routine access to European polity and become its "polity member", which means one of the constituted political actors enjoying routine access to the decision making processes and public resources.¹⁴ Along these lines, European business community enjoys institutionalized interactions with some "target European actors" that have decision making power in economic and industrial domain. In this case of BusinessEurope, it is possible to talk about a double shift on the locus of power from politics to the market, and from national to supranational level in certain policy areas.

Concerning the BusinessMed, implementing a structured collective action is more difficult for four reasons:

- First, there is not a Mediterranean collective action model. Within the Mediterranean area, the political opportunities, needs, interests, intellectual frames and repertoires of entrepreneurial organizations are divergent.

- Second, compared to BusinessEurope, BusinessMed is a young organization. Although it was founded in 2002, its institutional activities began in 2004.

- Third, within the Mediterranean space, there are no supranational institutions which have a power of decision on matters related to regional business conditions. There are no Mediterranean authorities (like the European Commission or Council of the EU) who can directly influence the activities of Mediterranean entrepreneurs.

- Fourth, the "politicization" of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean entrepreneurs is not yet achieved. As underlined earlier, they function within authoritarian regimes and un-liberalized economic systems, where power shift from central authorities to specific policy actors and from politics to the

¹² Belen Balanya, Ann Doherty, Olivier Hoedeman, Adam Ma'anit, Erik Wesselius, "UNICE: Industry's Well-Oiled Lobby Machine", *Europe-Regional and Global Restructuring and the Rise of Corporate Power*, (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

¹³ Serdaroğlu, op. cit in note 8, pp. 439-440

¹⁴ For a reading on the concept of "polity member", see McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, op. cit. in note 3, p. 12.

market has not yet been achieved. In this sense, the Southern/Eastern Mediterranean business communities have not become polity members at domestic level but remain as “challengers”, meaning those actors lacking routine access to decision making process and public resources, and who seek for opportunities of interaction with political elites.¹⁵

BusinessMed was founded with the ultimate objective of establishing an institutionalized dialogue between the professional organizations of the Member States, in order to contribute to the creation and development of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area and the liberalization of exchanges between them and with the European Union. However, the activities of the organization are not merely consecrated to economic cooperation and technical regulations within the given economic facts of the region. It assigns itself a mission of changing these facts, of “reforming” the dominating economic structures of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, by proposing policies supporting transition towards a market economy. This mission projects the particularity of the problems of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean entrepreneurs, compared to their European counterparts who function within the European single market, according to the principles of free market and free competition.

2. Future of the Mediterranean and turning towards Europe:

Euro-Mediterranean Business cooperation is one of the main pillars of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership which aims in creating a Free-Trade Zone between the EU and the Third Mediterranean countries. In the “Final Declaration of the First Euro-Mediterranean Top Contractors” in Valence, the Euro-Mediterranean business community has declared that one of the most important difficulties in achieving the “Free Trade Zone” would be the assumption of the consequences of the implementation of the “Zone” by Southern and Eastern countries. For facing this challenge, these countries were promised aid from the EU, in terms of financial support, greater European investment and development of business relations. Besides, the channels of cooperation among entrepreneurs through BusinessEurope (then UNICE) would serve as a model or the business organizations in third Mediterranean countries in their efforts of rising to the challenges of a more open and competitive economy.¹⁶

Within the Euro-Mediterranean area, in spite of important disparities in terms of economic and political environment, entrepreneurs of the EU and

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ TÜSİAD, “Final Declaration of the First Euro-Mediterranean Top Contractors, Valence, 24 October 1995”, *Business Views and Actions on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* (TÜSİAD publications, No. T/2002-2/317, 2002), pp. 19-27.

third Mediterranean countries are well aware of economic opportunities since long time. This zone of the world has a high level economic power: Including the Northern rim, the Mediterranean space, with a population of nearly 380 million inhabitants (that is 7 % of the world population) produces 15 % of the annual wealth of the planet and makes up 16 % of world trade.¹⁷ With a combined GDP of USD 15.4 trillion in 2006, higher than that of ALENA (15.3 trillion) and much higher than Asia's GDP (9.0 trillion for China+India+Japan+ASEAN countries).¹⁸

In the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, there can be important challenges in terms of industrial development and job creation. The industrial fabric is still weak and dominated by a few sectors such as energy, real estate, tourism, telecoms, textile and agriculture. SMEs do not receive the needed financial support. However, with economic growth rates well ahead of EU members, these countries represent particularly propitious markets for European investors constantly in search of new outlets.¹⁹ A positive growth differential is now established vis-à-vis Europe, notably in terms of GDP per capita (an average growth of 5% between 2000 and 2008).²⁰ A significant increase in foreign investment has been observed over the last years. In this area the EU has multiplied its efforts by allocating considerable resources, like the "Invest in Med" project aiming at developing sustainable trade relationships, investments and enterprise partnerships between the two rims of the Mediterranean.²¹

All these facts make economy the most promising area for creation of new vectors of exchange between Euro-Mediterranean countries. The business communities of the both rims of the Mediterranean express their will to employ the economic potential of the region more effectively. In this regard, the BusinessMed has announced the strategy of "Mare Nostrum" in 2005 for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean economies, with the objective of catching up with the EU level. The strategy aimed to accelerate transition to market economy, obtain a durable economic growth, improve the business environment by reducing the State control in economy and

¹⁷ Accessed on 6 June 2010, www.animaweb.org/en/investir_enmediterranee_en.php.

¹⁸ Bénédicte de Saint-Laurent, *Barcelona relancé par l'Union de la Méditerranée*, Accessed on 12 May 2010, www.iemed.org/publicacions/paper5.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Funded at 75% by the European Union over the 2008-2011 period, it is implemented by the MedAlliance consortium, led by ANIMA. Operations of the consortium are: Networking (BtoB events, Business Representative Organizations matchmaking, conferences); Assistance (support missions and short/long term staff exchanges); Training (workshops); Documentation (guide books, economic intelligence, reports). Other major issues addressed by the program relate to young and women entrepreneurs, Diasporas, micro-enterprises, franchising and leasing, public-private partnerships and access to financing.

administrative burdens, and improve management structures.²² Also, in this proclamation published right after the strategy, BusinessMed has declared its expectations from the EU. According to the organization, the Mediterranean and European economic interests are interlocked and complementary, and the European and Mediterranean areas are not distinguished. The coherent development of this area requires shared responsibilities and common programs between the decision making centers of the both sides. BusinessMed expects an explicit support and increased investment of the EU in economic, political and social reforms in the third Mediterranean countries.

From its side, the EU is also willing to contribute to change an enhanced dialogue with the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean private sector for answering their demands in terms of its active involvement in the reform process. As a result of the long lived consultation culture and its openness to dialogue with non political actors, the European Commission appears as the most concerned European institution. In cooperation with the BusinessEurope, Commission helps the BusinessMed make use of European political opportunities, and become a member of the European polity as a result of permanent interactions with European political elites. Right after the creation of BusinessMed, a delegation of Euro-Mediterranean business representatives met on May 23, 2002, with the former President of the European Commission, Roman Prodi, and the former commissioner for Enterprise, Erkki Liikanen, in order to formally introduce the new organization of Mediterranean entrepreneurs. The institutional ties between the BusinessMed and the BusinessEurope are not only exploited for such efforts of socialization, but have given solid political consequences. BusinessMed assists to certain meetings held in decision-making centers of the EU, like the biannual meetings of the Working group on Industrial Cooperation constituted by the Directorate General of Enterprise of the European Commission. In these meetings, the participants are representatives of all BusinessMed/BusinessEurope members, representatives from Member countries of the EU, several other working units from the European Commission, and professional organizations from the Euro-Mediterranean Zone.²³ BusinessMed participates in every Euro-Mediterranean Conference in industry organized in order to review the necessary actions related to the company policy and the free movement of the goods, and formulation of common strategies for facing the challenges of the globalization.²⁴

²² UMCE, *La stratégie Mare Nostrum pour une convergence des pays Méditerranéens vers l'économie mondiale*, (Brussels: UMCE, 2005).

²³ UMCE press releases on "Meeting of the Working Group on the Euro-Mediterranean Industrial Cooperation, January 12-13 2006 and June 15-16 2006" (Brussels: UMCE, 2006).

²⁴ Accessed on 31 March 2011, www.business-med.com.

BusinessMed also takes part in specific activities organized within the institutional framework of the EU. One of the best examples is its participation to the Workshop organized by the "Group of the European People's Party" (Christian Democrats) and the "European Democrats about the future of the Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation" in the European Parliament.²⁵

It is possible to give other examples regarding the interactions between the BusinessMed and European political elites. In its commitment to the exploitation of the economic potential in the Mediterranean, BusinessMed turns to the EU, willing to contribute to the formulation of specific European strategies regarding the region. This situation is at odds with the domestic political capacities of its members, when they suffer authoritarian political structures and remain as "challengers" of the national polity. The paradox between the national and supranational political systems reduce the effectiveness of the enterprise of "BusinessMed", when the organization seems representing a Mediterranean interest within the European polity, without being able to find same kind of access to internal decision making center.

3. Limits for a Mediterranean Entrepreneurial Collective Action

The actors from the BusinessMed and BusinessEurope that we have interviewed underline this inconvenience. A representative from the external relations department of one BusinessMed member organizations believes that the internal dynamics of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries would not be sufficient for triggering a supranational Business organization in the region. This responsible believes that if the Barcelona Process had not been launched, an organization like BusinessMed would not have been founded. According to him, BusinessMed stems from the need to ensure, with the support from key European actors, the participation of Mediterranean businessmen to the realization of a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Zone and the development of trade relations between the two sides of the Mediterranean.²⁶ According to another responsible, from an entrepreneur association that is member of the both BusinessEurope and BusinessMed, it is possible to talk about a convergence of economic interest between the entrepreneurs of both organizations. This is why they have similar structures based on committees and working groups, and do research and studies on same economic and industrial issues. However, he

²⁵ UMCE Press Release on "Participation de l'UMCE à la journée d'études du groupe EPP-ED au Parlement européen" (Tunis: UMCE, December 2006).

²⁶ Interview with a responsible from a BusinessMed Member Organization, Istanbul, 17 June 2006.

believes that there exist a divergence of political interests, when in the South and Eastern Mediterranean the civil society organizations are not willing to, or able to, put themselves in conflict with public authorities. The entrepreneur organizations do not make exceptions. They take little role in the political guidelines of their country without having the experience to propose strategies and to take part in the creation of public policies. He believes, the entrepreneurs of "Muslim" countries fear dialogue with political leaders. He thinks that for this reason the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership cannot have the same effects on all the entrepreneurs of the Zone, and there are obvious gaps between the political capacities and degrees of politicization of European and Southern/Eastern Mediterranean entrepreneurs. This responsible believes that in spite of BusinessMed participation to important European Conferences and its access to European institutions, in their national context, the major political decisions related to the Partnership are taken merely by governments. "Without effective participation of civil society, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has little chance of success".²⁷ When we ask this responsible the meaning of their organization's engagement in the activities of BusinessMed under these circumstances, he answered that the cooperation between BusinessMed and BusinessEurope may not alone guarantee the achievement of Barcelona Process, but definitely contributes to improvement of business opportunities. For another responsible from the same entrepreneurial organization the entrepreneurs of the EU and third Mediterranean countries can cooperate independently of an institutional process like the Barcelona process and Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, especially on the areas such as business development, trade, technology, competitiveness and innovation. He says BusinessEurope has developed its competences in these areas and members of BusinessMed can benefit from them merely for business objectives, without any attachment to any regional ideal.²⁸

Conclusion

Regarding the entrepreneurs' associations of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, implementing a regional collective action depends for the time being on European institutions and political opportunities, and on technical and non controversial issues. It is very arguable that the collective action undertaken by BusinessMed contributes to any "contentious politics" by Mediterranean businessmen, because of the inadequacy of political opportunities, difficulties in creating a common collective action frame (a common understanding of the situation they are in) and poor

²⁷ Interview with responsible A from a business organization that is both a member of the BusinessMed and BusinessEurope. Istanbul, 12 September 2006.

²⁸ Interview with responsible B from a business organization that is both a member of the BusinessMed and BusinessEurope, Istanbul, 12 September 2006.

repertoires of contention under authoritarian regimes. The organization permits rather its members to move towards European decision making centers, whose competence areas have been enlarged by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership renamed as "Union for the Mediterranean" and by new European policies such as the European Neighborhood Policy. After the launch of these political instruments and objectives, European institutions began to create Mediterranean economic stakes that are becoming BusinessMed's primary targets. From a neo-functionalist point of view, there exists a transfer of loyalties of BusinessMed members to the European level, expecting that the solution of their specific problems can be possible by interaction with European political and economic elites. Via BusinessMed, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean entrepreneurs tend to enjoy the solidarity from their European counterparts and get articulated to the European decision making process for promoting their professional interests, like finding financial aid and resources, undertaking bilateral business cooperation and signing agreements, and profiting from the experiences of their European counterparts both in terms of management and politicization. Europe appears as the zone of the extension of their operations, and with a greater support from both their counterparts and the European institutions these entrepreneurs are hoping to benefit from the potential of the rich European market. For present, these economic opportunities appear as the most important motivating factors. Nevertheless, in the future, BusinessMed can contribute to the politicization of Mediterranean entrepreneurs, and enable them to take part in certain political decision making processes, at national and supranational levels. This depends on the social and political change that is expected to take place in the region. However, for the time being, it seems that regional entrepreneurs can hardly become vectors of this change without European involvement.

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