



**FEMISE Annual Conference 2012**

**23-24 November 2012**

**Marrakech, Morocco**

**Concept note**

**Theme: “Inclusive Development in the South -Med Countries and the role of the EU-Med partnership”**

**1. Context and Conference Focus**

Since 1995, when the Barcelona process began, the Southern Mediterranean countries appeared to be on their way to catching up with emerging markets. Growing at approximately 5 percent per year, countries like Tunisia and Egypt were hailed by International Financial Institutions for being on the right track and for making notable progress. However, the uprisings of the last couple of years have shown that there was something wrong with the underlying model of development adopted in these countries. Apparently, there was too much focus on economic growth and too little on inclusion or fair distribution of the benefits. Widespread corruption was also evident.

To be sure, the regional averages for poverty indicate that countries of the Middle East have one of the lowest levels of poverty in the developing world. Similarly, their Gini coefficients, a measure of income inequality, indicate that inequality in the region is less severe than Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. But these averages conceal large variations within and between countries. Economic growth left many behind and social services failed to reach the poor. Unemployment has persisted at more than 14 percent, with the rates much higher among the youth and women. Similarly, labour participation, measured by the ratio of those employed relative to the population, was far below the corresponding levels in all other developing regions. Social service provision was either of low quality or did not reach those who most need it, especially in terms of education, health services or subsidies of basic goods. Not surprisingly, a larger percent of the population in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Libya, Morocco and Syria considered themselves to be less “thriving” than before right before the uprisings.

Having gone through the “Arab Spring”, the challenge these countries faces is how to meet rising aspirations among the population for better standards of living for all. This is what might be called “Inclusive Growth” or more widely “Inclusive Development”. This conference is intended to help answer this main question.

The second area of focus of the conference is related to the role of the international community towards achieving inclusive growth in the Arab Spring countries.

These two major questions will be the subject of discussion during the FEMISE 2012 annual conference under the theme of: “Inclusive Development in the South-Med Countries and the Role of the EU-Med Partnership”. The conference will be held in Marrakech, Morocco on the 23 and 24th of November 2012.

Beside the plenary sessions, the conference will involve three parallel sessions, a special session and the General Assembly for the members of the network. The conference will offer an opportunity for members of the network, distinguished speakers, academics, policymakers and representatives of the EU to engage in a constructive dialogue about such a critical issue as inclusive growth and the role of the EU in supporting such process in the south.

**2. Plenary Sessions**

***Plenary 1: Drivers of inclusive growth***

The concept of inclusive growth is different from pro-poor strategies. Rather than focusing on alleviating poverty, inclusive growth takes into account issues of equity, social justice and poverty reduction. In that sense, inclusive growth is not only about creating new jobs but also about creating equal opportunities for the entire population.

Speakers in this plenary will assess the limited success of the South-Med countries in achieving inclusive growth in light of the experience of more successful countries in Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe. Besides identifying the drivers of inclusive growth, they will assess the way policies have been designed and implemented. In addition, they will provide a set of recommendations to the Arab spring countries in terms of how to pursue an inclusive growth agenda in the future.

More concretely, the speakers in this first plenary will: (i) introduce the concept of inclusive growth, its broadly acknowledged properties, its applicability and how to adopt these policies; and (ii) contrast the experience of the South-Med countries with success stories in other developing countries (from Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia); and (iii) make recommendations for the Arab spring countries.

### ***Plenary 2: The politics of inclusive growth***

Whether countries adopt inclusive growth strategies or not depends on the nature of the prevailing political regimes. Less inclusive political regimes are not likely to adopt inclusive growth strategies; more inclusive political regimes are likely to do so. The key question is whether the Arab spring countries are likely to be more inclusive politically and therefore more inclusive economically or not? This is the question the panelists will address in this plenary.

In the Arab spring countries, the participants in the uprising against authoritarian regimes were demanding freedom, social justice and dignity. Once the dictators were gone, elections were held and new governments took office. In some sense, there is a new social contract in the making. How will the new social contract look like in light of the new political reality? Are the new economic policies likely to reflect the demands of the population at large? What lessons can be drawn for the Arab spring countries from other transition countries?

More concretely, the speakers in this session will (i) attempt to explain why the previous political regimes did not pay sufficient attention to issues of equity and equality; (ii) speculate about the likely political trajectories in the Arab Spring countries in light of other transitions; and (iii) assess the extent to which they will pursue more inclusive growth strategies.

### ***Plenary 3: The possible role of the international community and the EU-Med partnership in supporting inclusive growth in the region***

So far, the international community and the EU have been supportive of the revolts in the Arab spring countries. The support has taken different forms, ranging from moral support to sharing of experiences to easing the financial pressure. However, each actor has been looking for the appropriate role to play. The key question to address in this panel is the following: what is the appropriate role for the international community in supporting the transition countries in the south med, and what can the EU in particular do? Is it time for the EU to revisit the neighborhood policy?

More concretely, the speakers in this plenary will: (i) provide an articulation of the appropriate role for the international community in support of the south med transition countries; (ii) elaborate the best modalities for doing so, and (iii) propose new ways for the EU in support of inclusive growth in the south med countries.

### **Special Session: Socio-economic surveys from the South Med Countries**

The importance of this session is derived from the basic idea that to understand the impediments to the inclusive growth, it is crucial to look into the dynamics at the local (or micro) level. This special session will have for objective to present selected initiatives of primary data collections (surveys) at the national levels in the region. These datasets are currently being collected under different themes in different countries of the region and towards which FEMISE has contributed (either directly, in earlier stages of the project or in future implementation of the project).

## **3. Structure of the FEMISE Annual Conference**

***Time: 23-24 November 2012***

***Place: Marrakech, Morocco.***

***Organization of the conference sessions:***

The conference will last two days the 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2012. The day prior to the conference (normally in the afternoon) will be the meeting of the Board of FEMISE (only members of the Board will be attending this meeting). The second day of the conference (normally in the afternoon) the General Assembly Meeting will be organized for members of the Network. The conference is organised as follows:

**(1) 3 plenary sessions addressing the main theme of the conference** and the General Assembly

**(2) 1 Special Session: Socio–economic surveys from the South Med Countries**

**(3) 3 Parallel sessions:** that would include presentation of a selection of the most recent FEMISE research Reports that have been produced this year. These sessions will be on the following topics: knowledge based economies; renewable energies; factor mobility, including migration; Trade in services; performance of the agriculture sector; the role of SMEs, inclusive growth and issues of decentralization.