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THE MEDA PROGRAMME IN MOROCCO 12 YEARS ON: RESULTS, EXPERIENCES AND TRENDS

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May 2008

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The MEDA programme has been the basic financial instrument for cooperation between the EU and Mediterranean countries throughout the period 1995-2006¹. The adoption of the programme in 1995 was closely linked with the emerging institutionalisation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), launched at the Barcelona summit in November 1995 as a framework for an ambitious agenda of bilateral and regional relations between the European Union and Southern Mediterranean countries. The aim of this still-evolving relationship is a progressive rapprochement between the two shores of *Mare Nostrum* that is based on cooperation in the fields of policy and security, economic and financial relations and social and cultural dialogue. Thus, the MEDA Programme was devised as a policy-guided instrument of EU policy in the Mediterranean basin, since its long-term objectives are linked with the EMP agenda.

The EMP has been extensively analysed in academic literature. Some of the aspects most deserving of attention are: the political and security aspects of the process; economics and trade; social and cultural relations between Mediterranean countries and the policy-making process in the EU. Despite such academic interest in analysis and research into the EMP, research on the MEDA Programme has been virtually absent in scholarly debate on the EMP. The most comprehensive research on the different aspects of the MEDA Programme was carried out by Patrick Holden, who focused on the MEDA Programme in general (Holden, 2003, 2005a; 2006) as well as the case of Morocco (Holden, 2004, 2005b). Other works include general studies that analyse the features of this Programme from the point of view of the EU decision-making system (Philippart, 2001) and the impact of the MEDA Programmes on regional integration (Stetter, 2004). However, little work has been done on the efficiency of the EU's financial instruments in pursuing its objectives in Mediterranean

1. The acronym MEDA derives from the French: *Mesures d'accompagnement*.

countries. Obviously, this empirical gap has to do with the enormous difficulties in obtaining reliable empirical data on the MEDA Programme, and which lead analysts to turn to a “statistical detective”, since official numbers “do not square” (Mañé Estrada and Maestro Yarza, 2001: 5)².

This paper is an attempt to contribute to this slowly-emerging analysis of the MEDA Programme. The basic point of reference for this research is an analytical framework developed by Esther Barbé *et al.* (2007) which was devised to analyse the efficiency of EU policies on neighbouring countries from a perspective of European Foreign Policy studies. The paper adopts this perspective in order to answer the question of the MEDA Programme’s efficiency as an instrument of European Foreign Policy for achieving its political, economic and social objectives e.g. influencing the path of reform in Mediterranean countries in order to stimulate the implementation of the EMP agenda. In order to answer this research question, I will be analysing the efficiency of the MEDA Programme in Morocco during the period 1995-2006.

Morocco is perceived to be the Mediterranean country that is best disposed toward relations with the EU (Emerson *et al.*, 2007). In March 2000 the Association Agreement that had been signed with Morocco in 1996 came into force. Before then, the contractual framework for relations between Morocco and the European Economic Community was the Cooperation Agreement, which was signed in 1976 and regulated the economic, technical and financial cooperation aspects of the relationship. Furthermore, by 1991 the European Communities and Morocco had agreed on four Financial Protocols which constituted the framework for

2. In order to ensure statistical coherence, financial data are taken from the Mid-Term Report on the MEDA Programme commissioned by the European Commission (ECO-RYS-NEI, 2005). However, it must be stressed that the official data included in European Commission documents tend to vary significantly.

the supply of financial aid to Morocco³. The aid provided by the European Communities within the framework of the four Financial Protocols was almost €1.1 billion for the period 1976-1996 (Commission Européenne, 2001). The EMP introduced a significant shift into the institutional and contractual context of cooperation between the EU and Morocco. First of all, both parties established their relations on a new contractual basis –an Association Agreement– that regulated a wide range of issue-areas of relations, including the progressive creation of a Free Trade Area between Morocco and European Communities. Secondly, the assistance provided by the EU to Morocco under the auspices of the MEDA Programme increased significantly. Morocco became the leading beneficiary of MEDA funds, and total aid figures rose to €1.6 billion during the period 1995-2006. Thus, Morocco can be considered as a case study of a “good practice” country performing within the framework of the MEDA Programme.

My analysis of the performance of the MEDA Programme in Morocco is carried out by assessing three factors: intra-European consistency; the structure of incentives and legitimacy. The first variable is *intra-European consistency*, the importance of which is assessed in terms of the *determinacy* (clarity and formality) of MEDA objectives as well as the *institutional process* of decision-making and implementation. The second variable is the *structure of incentives* between the EU and Morocco, and which is evaluated by taking into account the credibility of the EU’s conditionality in supplying MEDA funds, and the size and speed of delivery of rewards offered by the EU to the neighbouring country. The third variable is the *legitimacy* of the EU’s assistance, and which is based on factors such as Morocco’s participation in the MEDA programming process and the country’s view of the appropriateness of the actual MEDA Programme.

3. The Moroccan Financial Protocols were signed in 1977, 1982, 1988 and 1991.

The following five sections of this paper explore a range of aspects: (1) the MEDA Programme's overall performance; (2) the EU's coherence in supplying MEDA assistance; (3) the incentives offered by the MEDA Programme; (4) views on the efficiency of the MEDA Programme in Morocco and (5) tentative considerations on the prospects of the new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument that has replaced the MEDA Programme since 2007.

The MEDA Programme: overall trends

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the MEDA Programme, launched in 1995, represented a new political and economic framework for relations between the EU and Mediterranean countries⁴. The European Council in Cannes (June 1995) agreed that the five-year budget line for cooperation with Mediterranean countries in the framework of the ongoing Euro-Mediterranean Partnership would be ECU 4.6 billion. According to the Council's decision, these funds should be available for the MEDA Programme, other regional activities and pending Financial Protocol payments. In addition, this budget would be accompanied by an equivalent amount of European Investment Bank loans. In the context of the new expectations arising from the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration in November 1995,

4. The EMP replaced a framework of relations between the EU and Mediterranean countries called the Renovated Mediterranean Policy, which was introduced in the early 1990s and which had, in turn, been an amendment of the so-called Global Mediterranean Policy that had existed since the 1970s. The European Community's supply of aid and assistance to Mediterranean countries was based on what were called Financial Protocols, and which had been signed by the European Communities with each Mediterranean country for a period of five years.

the Council of the European Union approved in 1996 the MEDA Regulation that brought about the MEDA Programme. The MEDA I Programme budget for the period 1995-1999 was finally set at a total of ECU 3.4 billion. Furthermore, after assessment of the MEDA I Regulation and according to the initial plans, this Regulation was revised in 2000⁵ and for the period of a further seven years (2000-2006) the MEDA II budget was set at €5.3 billion.

In general, the approach of the MEDA Programme was to take into account the deficiencies of the Financial Protocol system and the experiences of the PHARE Programme that had been implemented in Central and Eastern European countries since the early 1990s. The MEDA Programme was divided into bilateral and regional projects, though most of the projects that have been executed fall into the former category. Specifically, the function of MEDA funds was linked to EMP aims, particularly the establishing of Free Trade Areas.

The MEDA Regulations envisaged three types of bilateral actions to be funded by the MEDA budget: grants, risk capital and interest rate subsidies for loans granted by the EIB in the field of the environment. The special type of support funded by the MEDA Programme was Structural Adjustment Facility, and which consisted of direct support for beneficiary countries' treasuries in order to support special reform programmes. Specifically, bilateral grant non-reimbursed support was designed for co-financing activities and projects, usually covering up to 80% of the costs. The MEDA technical assistance projects were divided into four categories: services, works, supplies and, exceptionally, donations for small projects

5. The assessment of the MEDA I Regulation and the Programme's performance are included in COWI Consulting Engineers and Planners (1998) and Wilfried Euchner *et al.* (1999).

carried out by civil society institutions. Usually, MEDA projects took the form of technical assistance consisting of different on-ground undertakings ranging from infrastructure development to training, capacity-building for institutions, investment in micro-enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. MEDA funds were made available for a wide range of entities in beneficiary countries, both public and private.

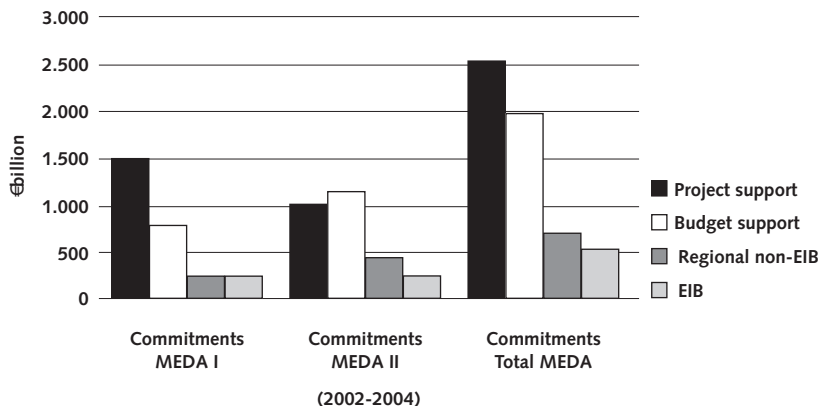
During the period 1995-2006, the EU allocated €5,555 billion for bilateral and regional projects in seven Mediterranean partner countries (see Appendix I)⁶. Almost 80% of the MEDA assistance was provided in the framework of bilateral programmes agreed between the European Union and Mediterranean countries, and approximately 20% of funds were allocated for the implementation of regional projects. The average annual allocation of bilateral projects fell from €495 million during the MEDA I to €430 million during MEDA II. In the framework of these bilateral projects, the average amount allocated per year per inhabitant in seven MEDA countries decreased from €5.5 during 1995-1999 to €4.4 during 2000-2006. In all, the EU allocated €5.481 billion for bilateral projects. In addition to these bilateral projects, the EU designated approximately €1,074 billion for regional MEDA projects. MEDA's total spending on regional projects grew from 12% during (€6 million per year) MEDA I to 26% during MEDA II (€156 million per year). Therefore, taking into account both the bilateral and regional projects during 1995-2006, the average allocation was €46 million per year, though during MEDA II this allocation decreased slightly: from €54 million in 1995-1999 to €41 million in 2000-2006.

6. The MEDA data concerning the West Bank and Gaza Strip are not included in this study.

The implementation of the MEDA Programme differs considerably in Mediterranean countries. One can observe, for example, considerable differences in funding to countries during the period 1995-2006: the leading beneficiaries of MEDA funds were Morocco (€1.6 billion), Egypt (€1.28 billion) and Tunisia (€900 million), while Jordan, Algeria, Syria and Lebanon received significantly less MEDA assistance. However, considerable differences exist if we consider the average assistance per inhabitant. In this case, the greatest beneficiaries during the entire period were Jordan (€0.57), Tunisia (€0.98) and Lebanon (€0.72) while four other countries - Morocco (€0.66), Egypt (€0.74), Syria (€0.58) and Algeria (€0.33) - received significantly less MEDA assistance per inhabitant. These funding allocations also varied between the MEDA I and MEDA II periods, during which there were considerable changes in the distribution of funds: during MEDA II funding increased for Syria, Algeria and Morocco but decreased for Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. One particularly significant tendency is that funding decreased for Egypt from an annual average of €37 million to €5 million.

In total, during the MEDA I period, 53% of the funds allocated (more than €1.5 billion) went to support technical assistance projects, 29% for budget support (€21 million), 9% for regional projects (€73 million) and 9% for operations of the European Investment Bank (€269 million). This distribution of funds among different types of MEDA instruments changed during the five years of the second period of the Programme's implementation. Support for technical assistance projects decreased to 39% of allocated funds (€1 billion), but budget support and regional projects increased considerably to a total of 40% of allocated funds (€1.16 billion) and 16% of allocated funds (€54 million) respectively, while EIB operations remained at the same level (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. MEDA Commitments-project types

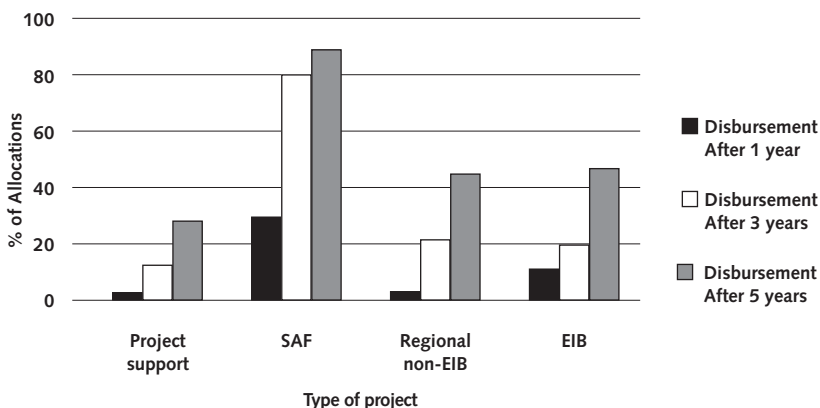


Source: Author’s elaboration on the basis of ECORYS-NEI (2005: 37)

However, all the above-mentioned data should be assessed in the context of the effective implementation of the projects allocated and planned. The general indicator of MEDA Programme performance is the level of payments. In general, the ratio of payments to allocations rose very slowly since 1995. During MEDA I, average payments were between 20% and 36% of allocations, and only during the MEDA II the payments grew considerably. In general, in 2004 the ratio between accumulated payments and accumulated allocations grew from 26% in 1999 to 54% in 2004. These data indicate a very slow process of implementation of MEDA-funded projects. However, the tendency to accelerate the disbursement of MEDA II funds could also be observed and, for example, five years after the allocations of the MEDA II funds, the ratio of disbursement was 15% higher than in the case of MEDA I. This tendency is related to the growth of the overall share of Structural Adjustment Facility (SAF) projects in the general level of allocations. Thus, while the level of disbursement of payments corre-

sponding to the SAF project was 89% of allocations after 5 years, the ratio of disbursement after 5 years was 29% of allocations in the case of project support (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Disbursement ratio



Source: Author's elaboration on the basis of ECORYS-NEI (2005: 117).

MEDA-funded projects placed particular emphasis on supporting economy sectors (see Appendix II). During the period 1995-2004, the amount of MEDA allocations was €5.8 billion for 291 bilateral and regional projects. The most important areas of intervention were economic institutional support (allocation of €78 million in the framework of 55 projects); private sector (allocation of €795 million in the framework of 31 projects); education and training (allocation of €32 million in the framework of 18 projects) and infrastructure and transport (allocation of €63 million in the framework of 29 projects).

On the basis of the above general data on the implementation of MEDA Programme since 1995, we can discern various characteristics

of the instrument. The first trait is a very uneven distribution of MEDA projects in the case of particular Mediterranean countries. The second concerns the high level of allocations as against the relatively low level of effective payments; that is to say, that the projects programmed by the EU in Mediterranean countries were implemented very slowly. However, this question was resolved progressively during the period under analysis, when the disbursement of MEDA payments grew significantly. Thus, the third feature is the overall improvement in the MEDA Programme's general performance during its second period. The fourth characteristic is the preference attributed to the projects concentrated in the economy-related areas and the increasing priority attached to budget support operations, which allow faster disbursement of allocations.

In view of these observations in the following parts of the paper, some tentative explanations of the performance of the MEDA Programme are presented taking into account the case of Morocco, one of the biggest beneficiaries of this Programme.

(In)-coherences of the MEDA objectives and decision-making system

The intra-European coherence factor presumes that the EU's capacity to act with common purpose increases the success of EU foreign policy. The general hypothesis concerning the weight of the intra-European coherence is that MEDA Programme funding will be successful in achieving EU policy aims if the Programme's objectives and the intra-EU decision-making process are determined. The 'determinacy' refers to the clarity and formality of the MEDA Programme's objectives as well as the quality and acceptance by EU actors of rules and practices in implementing the MEDA Programme.

Determinacy of MEDA objectives

There are several documents that establish the legal foundations for the MEDA Programme in general, and for its implementation in specific countries in particular. In general we can observe three types of documents: bilateral and multilateral general agreements, MEDA Programme Regulations and operational programming documents (Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme). The analysis of the most important MEDA documents shows a relatively low degree of determinacy due to the lack of congruence on principles, objectives and priorities in these particular documents and the inconsistencies between them. Consequently, the definition of the MEDA Programme objectives was very confusing, especially during its first period.

On the bilateral level, the basic legal foundation for the MEDA Programme is established by the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements⁷. The section on financial cooperation established that the objective of the financial cooperation will be the “full attainment of this Agreement’s objectives”. However, it restricts the range of this cooperation to all issue-areas included in the Agreement’s sections “eco-

7. The Association Agreement with Morocco was signed in 1996 and came into force in March 2000. The Agreement covers different issue-areas of bilateral cooperation: political dialogue, the establishing of a Free Trade Area for industrial products, rights of establishment and services, capital movements, economic cooperation in the following areas: education and training, scientific, technical and technological cooperation, environment, industrial cooperation, investments, standardisation, legislation approximation, financial services, agriculture and fisheries, transport, telecommunications and information technology, energy, tourism, customs, statistics, money laundering, drug use and trafficking prevention; cooperation in social cultural matters and financial cooperation. “Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Kingdom of Morocco, of the other part”, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 70, 18 March 2000.

conomic cooperation” and “cooperation in social and cultural matters”, as well as, specifically, modernising the economy, economic infrastructure, promoting private investment and job-creation activities, “taking into account the effects on the Moroccan economy of the progressive introduction of a free trade area, in particular where the updating and restructuring of industry are concerned” and “flanking measures for policies implemented in the social sectors”⁸. In addition, the European Community may support Moroccan structural adjustment programmes. In all, the provisions of the Agreement facilitate cooperation in various issue-areas, though the maximum priority of the European assistance relates to the economy, especially taking into account the Free Trade Zone prospects.

However, the implementation of the MEDA Programme was also influenced by other multilateral compromises agreed both at EU level and in the framework of the EMP process. In relation to the first aspect, the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean approved in 2000 indicated the EU’s commitment to maximise “the impact of financial cooperation through the EU budget, notably MEDA, and the EIB” and to enhance economic dialogue with Mediterranean partners, notably in the context of programming financial assistance, with a view to promoting faster economic transition, sound fiscal and monetary policies and structural reform”⁹. In this sense, the strategic objectives included in this document attached a special priority to the macroeconomic objectives of the financial cooperation. On the other hand, the different political and sectorial declarations of the regional dimension of the EMP usually included the opinion on the implementation of the

8. *Ibidem*. Art. 75.

9. “Common Strategy of the European Council of 19 June 2000 on the Mediterranean region”, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 185, 22 July 2000.

MEDA Programme, but sometimes also indicated new possible priorities for MEDA Programme, such as the Valencia Action Plan, which supported MEDA activities aimed at the establishing of the Free Trade Area in services (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 2002), the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Crete encouraged the MEDA support for energy policy reforms, the regional and sub-regional development of energy infrastructure interconnections and the emergence of a Maghreb electricity market as well as the involvement of MEDA partners in EU Programmes (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 2003).

The low level of determinacy of the MEDA Programme can be observed when the overall MEDA objectives are also analysed. According to the MEDA Regulation, the general objective of the Programme was to contribute “to initiatives of joint interest in three sectors of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership: the reinforcement of political stability and democracy, the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area and the development of economic and social cooperation, taking due account of the human and cultural dimension”. Despite, these intentions, other norms stressed that the implementation of MEDA I measures should take into account “long-term stability and prosperity, in particular in the fields of economic transition, sustainable economic and social development and regional and cross-border cooperation”¹⁰. The MEDA II Regulation changed the former wording and established MEDA Programme objectives as “sustainable development leading to long-term stability and prosperity (...) economic, social and environmental impact of economic transition, regional and sub-regional cooperation and building the capacity of Mediterranean

10. “Regulation (EC) No. 1488/96 in financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) in the reform of economic and social structures within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership”, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 189, 30 July 1996.

partners to integrate into world economy”¹¹. However, the appendices in both versions of the MEDA Regulation specified in more detail the objectives of the MEDA Programme. In 1996 the objectives were specified under the following priorities: support for economic transition and the establishing of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area, structural adjustment programmes, a better socioeconomic balance, regional and cross-border cooperation and good governance. After the revision of the MEDA Regulation, these priorities were amended and, for example, sustainable economic and social development appeared.

Notwithstanding, during the MEDA I period of implementation, MEDA Regulation provisions were accompanied by a second-order set of objectives specified in the “Guidelines for the indicative programmes”. In this document, the priorities related to the implementation of MEDA projects were organised into three areas: support for economic transition, strengthening socioeconomic balance and development of civil society. However, these transversal priorities were accompanied in the same document by specific priorities related to each Mediterranean beneficiary country. In the case of Morocco, the support was based on two complementary axes: improvement of socioeconomic balance through measures on rural development, water and the development of social services (in particular in education and health care) and support for economic transition including budgetary support to underpin a medium-term strategy of macroeconomic stabilisation and broad structural reforms, as well as measures to enhance enterprise competitiveness¹². At this operational level, a low level of determinacy

11. “Council Regulation (EC) No 2698/2000 of 27 November 2000 amending Regulation (EC) No 1488/96 on financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) in the reform of economic and social structures within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean”, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 311, 12 December 2000.
12. “Council Decision of 6 December 1996 concerning the adoption of guidelines for the

was observed during the MEDA I period when the first version of the National Indicative Programme in Morocco was approved in 1996 before the adoption of the Guidelines for Indicative Programmes. Thus, no programming process was undertaken in Morocco, and in many cases “the true programming and identification of specific actions was undertaken during the execution of the project, during many years, through the interactions of diverse actors involved in the MEDA cooperation” (Tejada Chacón, 2000: 12).

This confusing definition of the main priorities for MEDA projects changed during the MEDA II period. The MEDA Regulation amended in 2000 introduced new wording for the main objectives, though the furthest-reaching change was the replacement of the Guidelines by the Country Strategy Paper (CSP) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) that defined in greater detail the areas of MEDA Programme assistance in each country. The rationality behind establishing this new type of programming document linking the general MEDA regulations with specific beneficiary countries priorities were to provide clear definition of the EU long-term objectives of assistance cooperation and the indicators of implementation in order to facilitate its further evaluation (European Commission, 2000). Nevertheless, the Court of Auditors concluded that “it is very difficult to assess the Commission’s impact at the level of the EU’s strategic objectives as defined in the individual country strategy papers (CSPs), particularly when these objectives are described in fairly general terms (...), and when no specific indicators of achievements have been determined” (Court of Auditors, 2006: 10).

indicative programmes concerning financial and technical measures to accompany the reform of economic and social structures within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (MEDA)”, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 325 , 14 December 1996.

The CSP for Morocco adopted for the entire MEDA II period defined two basic priorities in the EU interventions: support for economic employment growth in order to counteract poverty, and support for the implementation of the Association Agreement in order to create an institutional and judicial order favouring the movement of investment¹³. Precisely, around these two principal areas the specific measures of intervention were defined in detail in two NIPs (2002-2004 and 2005-2006) attached to the CSP. Both NIPs described the specific projects to be implemented in Morocco and situated the specific project under the priorities pursued by the EU. During the period 2002-2004, these specific priorities were grouped under the following five priorities: reform of public administration, trade development, human resources development, migration management and environmental protection. The next Moroccan NIP introduced the following priorities for the period 2005-2006: upgrading of economic environment and trade development, improving the condition of disadvantaged population groups and combating poverty, environmental protection and human rights-related projects¹⁴. Therefore, only the operational documents approved for managing the assistance at a national level represent the real framework for the implementation of MEDA-funded projects. In this sense, the clear definition of the project's components and its basic parameters (including the objectives, expected results, performance indicators and their description included in CSP and NIPs) gave way to an improved determinacy of MEDA-funded projects. These documents, which are publicly available, constitute important and,

13. *Partenariat Euro-Med, Maroc, Document de Strategie 2002 – 2006 & Programme Indicatif National 2002 – 2004*, 6 December 2001, source: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/morocco/csp/02_06_fr.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).

14. *Euro-Med Partnership, Morocco, National Indicative Programme 2005-2006*; source: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/morocco/csp/nip_05_06_en.pdf (accessed 25 March 2008).

in fact, unique points of reference as regards the Programme's priorities and plans in each MEDA country. However, "the coherence between MEDA projects and the overall objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership remained small" (Stetter, 2004: 9).

The data in Appendix 3 on MEDA projects in Morocco shows that during MEDA I it was difficult to indicate a clear priority in terms of their total number and budget allocations, since programmes were split into 14 different types and issue-areas of interventions. Five infrastructure programmes are the only exception, with €27 million allocated. This tendency changed significantly during the MEDA II period. First of all we can distinguish the clear priority expressed both in the number of programmes as well as in the general budget allocations. Thus the priority is attached to the project related to the economic activities, especially in the context of the implementation of the Association Agreement. The largest part of the budget was allocated for 6 projects related to the economic institutional support, one project for the support of the private sector and three infrastructural projects. During the MEDA II period, the EU did not fund specific technical assistance programmes related to the environment, culture or agriculture, instead supporting projects related to justice and police and immigration on the one hand and two small projects concerning civil society and human rights. Therefore, the level of transparency and visibility as well issue-areas concentration all improved during MEDA II, but shortcomings as regards their linkage with general objectives of EU's assistance persisted.

Determinacy of the EU's institutional processes

I have assessed the determinacy of the MEDA Programme's institutional processes by taking into account the functioning of bureaucratic apparatus that operates in the field of external relations. The decision-making process related to the programming and implementation of the

MEDA Programme is complex. This system is characterised as a process of continuous deliberation and silent struggle between different actors in order to improve their own institutional positions and priorities. In this sense, there are two different tendencies. The European Commission focuses its priorities on the smooth implementation of the MEDA Programme, and Member States use the Programme as a political tool for promoting and defending the interests of the countries that are important for their foreign policies in general.

The European Commission is the central institution responsible for the appropriate preparation of the MEDA Programme. However, during the different stages, various organisational units of the European Commission are involved, which had to coordinate its activities with authorities of the beneficiary country as well as with Member States, both in the framework of the MED Committee and in the beneficiary country. Despite this important institutional role, the European Commission raised since the beginning the problem of the lack of sufficient human resources capable of managing this complicated process¹⁵.

Technical documents constitute the biggest bureaucratic burden for the implementation of MEDA-funded projects, especially due to time-consuming procedures. Theoretically, during MEDA I, the process of identification and approval of specific programmes and projects was developed on the basis of the entire sets of documents to be prepared by the European Commission services in cooperation with beneficiary countries and Member States (National Indicative Programmes, the Financial Framework Agreement, the Annual Financial Plan, including

15. For example, the execution of the MEDA I required an increase in human resources dealing with the different technical aspects of its implementation. Thus, the European Commission contracted about 100 persons divided into 10 MEDA Teams in order to execute these activities in Brussels and European Commission Delegations in third countries (European Commission, 1999: 43).

the list of projects to be financed and the documents for particular projects). And finally, on the basis of these documents, the European Commission services would already be able to initiate the process of competitive tenders. However, in the case of Morocco this order was not followed in practice, since the projects were first identified, and were then justified by the documents prepared by the European Commission services and approved by the Member States.

The bureaucracy and institutional divergences due to the close scrutiny exercised by the Member States led to serious delays in the implementation of the MEDA I. Originally, the nature of the MEDA Programme was pre-established during the months that preceded the Barcelona summit in November 1995; but due to the British veto, the period between the approval of the MEDA Programme in June 1995 and the final publication of the MEDA Regulation and of the Guidelines was approximately 18 months. These two documents were indispensable for the launch of the subsequent phases of the MEDA, its programming and implementation. Consequently, formal approval of further planning and implementation documents was delayed considerably. But in fact, as we have seen above, the implementation documents were prepared before the approval of the aforementioned Guidelines. These initial problems persisted during further phases of MEDA I implementation. As a result, during the MEDA I period, the real content of projects in Morocco was decided by the European Commission, though Member States in the MED Committee attempted to influence the process of decision-making in many other instances, for example, during the approval of particular projects or allocations of funds. In consequence, due to these internal decision-making problems, the effective implementation of the MEDA Programme in Morocco was considerably delayed. Thus, during the first two years of MEDA, only five programmes were approved and had signed the financial conventions with Morocco.

This situation improved during next years. There are differences between the two phases of the implementation of the MEDA Programme that influenced the consistency of the EU's administrative process. The amendment of the MEDA Regulation in 2000 made way for the changes in the process of programming and implementing MEDA-funded projects. This change was accompanied by a general revision of the EU's method of supplying external assistance.

The changes introduced in the MEDA Programme's decision-making process focused on the method and the process of programming and limited the disproportionate role of the MED Committee (and Member States). Especially, the strict supervision and control of the Programme implementation by the MED Committee during the whole project programming cycle from the revision of the Indicative Programmes to the revision of particular projects was considered to be an element that delayed the smooth adoption of the MEDA projects and in no way contributed to its improvement (Stetter, 2004: 13). As a consequence of the reforms introduced from 2000 onwards, the clear division of powers between different institutions was put in place and organisational cohesion improved considerably vis-à-vis its political objectives (Holden, 2006). After these changes, in general, the DG Relex is responsible for the strategic planning and programming of MEDA interventions, the Delegations together with the newly-established EuropeAid Development Office is responsible for the smooth identification of specific projects and their implementation. In consequence of these changes, the role of the MED Committee was limited to the approval of the annual financial plans for the next budget year that include the complete list of projects to be executed in the beneficiary country. However, despite these changes, the average period of the MEDA Programme cycle ranging from the initiation of the works on the CSPs to the end of the tender procedure and the

beginning of the disbursement of the funds ranges between 36 and 42 months (ECORYS-NEI, 2005: 76).

In all, the coherence of the MEDA Programme was relatively low due to both the multiplicity of different priorities envisaged in the political and technical documents and the complex decision-making system. During the MEDA I period, the EU operated through the mechanisms of “learning-by-doing” due to the lack of any clear instruments for the planning of specific measures, a tendency to limit possible errors through the open-method of programming and a lack of clear priorities for MEDA intervention. In many cases, the definition of projects and priorities was so wide that until the on-ground implementation of projects it was almost impossible to define their scope. This open-method of programming had the disadvantage of the possible poor use of funds and dispersion among different and non-linked activities (Euchner *et al.*, 1999: 66 - 67). Philippart concluded that “[G]lobally, MEDA is a Christmas tree. Its long list of objectives offers something for everybody: big collective gifts at the foot of the tree, plus smaller boxes for distinct government and mere ornaments hanging from the branches” (Phillippart, 2001: 125). However, the changes introduced during the second period of the MEDA Programme improved the project planning and programming cycle in beneficiary countries and mainstreamed the decision-making process.

The MEDA Programme as an incentive for domestic reform

In 1994, the European Commission indicated the need to increase substantially the technical and financial assistance for Mediterranean countries, and forwarded a proposal for establishing a general aid programme for Mediterranean countries with a budget of ECU 5.5 billion. According to this proposal, these funds should be available for countries willing to under-

take a wide-ranging modernisation of their economic and social systems¹⁶. However, as we have seen, these prospects concerning the growth of the overall European contribution to Mediterranean countries were limited considerably at first, and afterwards suffered from different shortcomings. Notwithstanding, MEDA funds attempted to deliver the aid under the mechanisms of conditionality and, in consequence, their amount should have been a considerable incentive for pursuing the objectives agreed in the framework of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of the EMP.

Conditionality

There are two possible types of conditionality for providing the MEDA funds: political conditionality and economic reform conditionality. According to the MEDA Regulation, the supply of MEDA funds depends on the fulfilment of the political conditions by Mediterranean countries and “appropriate measures might be adopted” if democratic principles, rules of law, human rights or fundamental principles are violated¹⁷. In fact, there was no further clarification concerning the procedures of the implementation of this clause. For example, in the case of SAF projects, “no provisions exist at present that give the Community the right to suspend any or all direct

16. “Reforzar la política mediterránea de la Unión Europea mediante una asociación euro-mediterránea. Comunicación de la Comisión al Consejo y al Parlamento Europeo, COM (94) 427 final”, (in:) *Suplemento 2/95 del Boletín de la UE*, Luxemburgo: Oficina de Publicaciones Oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas, pp. 7 – 26 and “Reforzar la política mediterránea de la Unión Europea: propuestas para el establecimiento de una asociación euromediterránea. Comunicación de la Comisión al Consejo y al Parlamento Europeo, COM (95) 72 final”, (in:) *Suplemento 2/95 del Boletín de la UE*, Luxemburgo: Oficina de Publicaciones Oficiales de las Comunidades Europeas, pp. 31 – 44.
17. “Regulation (EC) No. 1488/96 in financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) the reform of economic and social structures within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership”, *Official Journal of European Communities*, L 189, 30 July 1996.

budgetary support disbursements to states which are engaging in serious violations of human rights” (Byrne and Shamas, 2002: 67). Consequently, in the case of Morocco, there was no clear indication concerning the possibility of use of this political conditionality and, therefore, the financial leverage aimed at, for example, democratisation of Morocco through the use of political conditionality was not considered (Baraka, 2007: 24)¹⁸. Democratic conditionality was approached indirectly, since “the Commission was essentially counting on the spill-over effects of economic adjustment and growth to hasten the pace of democratic reforms” (Schimd, 2006: 25).

The MEDA Programme’s approach as an incentive for Mediterranean countries was closely linked with the “economic” or “performance” conditionality. This conditionality was related to progress made in implementing structural economic reforms and progressive liberalisation in Mediterranean countries. Especially in view of the fact that the MEDA Programme itself was an incentive for Mediterranean countries in concluding Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements and aimed at their effective implementation in establishing Free Trade Areas (Mañé Estrada and Maestro Yarza, 2001: 19-20). The conclusion of the Association Agreement was an additional criterion in providing MEDA Programme funds. The European Commission indicated the close link between the level of funds and Mediterranean countries’ willingness to observe Association Agreement objectives. However, as Holden noted, “the Commission has not produced anything which outlines more specifically what is expected and how conditionality might function” (Holden, 2004: 554).

18. Democratisation and human rights conditionality should be distinguished from the EU’s support for projects that encompass these issues. Moroccan civil society organisations benefited from the EU support provided mainly in the framework of MEDA Democracy, MEDA Regional and European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. The overview of some of these projects can be found in Baraka (2007) and Schimd (2006).

MEDA I budget distribution depended on criteria such as the population and *per capita* incomes, as well as the absorption capacity and the progress in concluding the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements. But in fact, progress in implementing structural reforms in the Mediterranean countries led to the redistribution of funds to countries that had advanced in economic reforms, since the MEDA budget was considered as a “reference contribution” that might have been modified later. Finally, funds not allocated until late 1999 were considered as “lost” to the beneficiary country. As a result, the European Commission was flexible enough to change the ultimate destination of funds and promoted some kind of competition among the beneficiary countries in implementing the projects in reward of the possibility of getting additional funds.

In consequence of this indirect “performance” conditionality, Morocco raised its total MEDA I support in comparison to the initial plans. The NIP for 1996-1998 established the support for this country to a total of €455.5 million, and including 1999 it stood at €580 million. However, in March 1998 the NIP was modified and enlarged for the coming years, when the European Commission approved 10 projects and allocated €72 million (e.g. approximately €76 million more than initially planned). After the MEDA I period, the MEDA II budget for Morocco grew as well; however, the average yearly increase was only €4 million (see Appendix I).

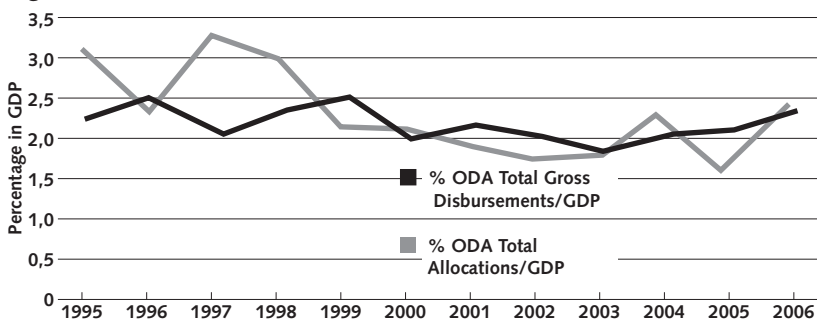
Costs of reforms vs. size and speed of rewards

The MEDA Programme represented an economic incentive that was an attempt to change the structure of cost-benefits calculation of Mediterranean countries undertaking reforms agreed in the framework of the EMP. In this sense, we might expect that the larger the financial offer provided in the framework of the MEDA Programme, the faster and more comprehensive the reforms undertaken in Mediterranean countries. However, the Court of Auditors observed that “the impact of EC support cannot be attributed to

its financial importance”, but “lies more in its attempts to address and support reforms (...) and to encourage Governments to tackle such issues”. In consequence, “EC support is therefore often of a quality and innovative nature, the impact of which is difficult to quantify” and, additionally, this task is rather difficult due to considerable delays accumulated (Court of Auditors, 2006: 8).

Morocco is involved in the continued process of economic reforms that was expected by International Monetary Institution on the one hand, and by the European Union on the other. Especially demanding is the agenda of reforms envisaged in the Association Agreement that envisages the establishing of a Free Trade Area with the European Union by 2012. The process of liberalisation poses a serious challenge and transformation costs for the Moroccan economy that present various structural problems. Similarly, the permanent process of economic liberalisation and reforms incurred relatively high costs and considerable challenges as regards social welfare. For example, according to Moroccan government estimates, the introduction of a Free Trade Area will amount to a loss of tax revenues of approximately 0.16% of GDP per year (Martín, 2004: 437). During the period 1995-2006, the Official Development Assistance (ODA) recorded by the OECD data and disbursed to Morocco was approximately 2.1 % of the annual GDP, and the allocations were approximately 3 % of the annual GDP (see Figure 3).

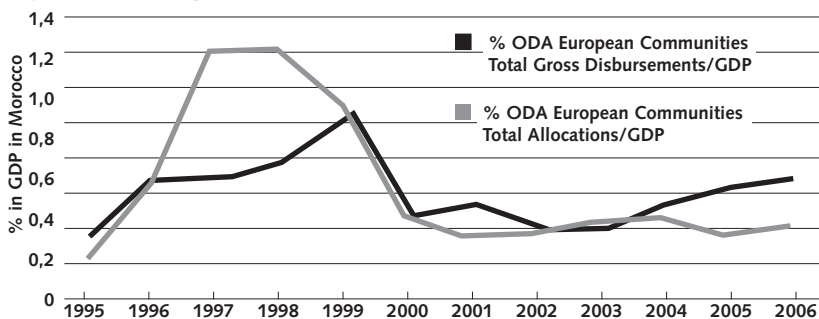
Figure 3. % ODA in GDP of Morocco



Source: Author’s calculations on the basis of IMF data and DAC OECD data

In this context, the size of the EU's contribution to the Moroccan reforms was limited in comparison with all international assistance. European Community assistance was approximately 0.5 % of annual GDP in Morocco (see Figure 4).

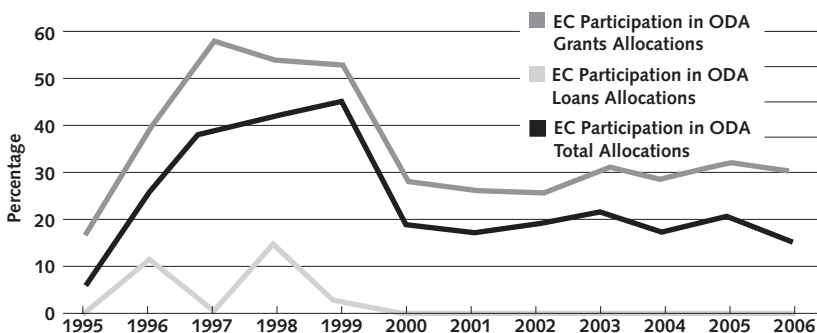
Figure 4. % European Communities ODA in GDP in Morocco



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of IMF data and DAC OECD data

According to OECD Development Assistance Committee data, the European Communities' share in all international assistance supplied to Morocco during the period 1995-2006 was approximately 24% of all allocations and all disbursement. There is considerable variation in the levels of both allocation and disbursements, but the European Communities' assistance was rather limited in general. During the MEDA I period, the European Communities' allocation registered steady growth and in 1999 rose to the level of 45% of all assistance allocations in Morocco; however, since 2000 it has dropped to the level of 20%. In this period, European Communities' grants allocations stood at approximately 34% (see Figure 5).

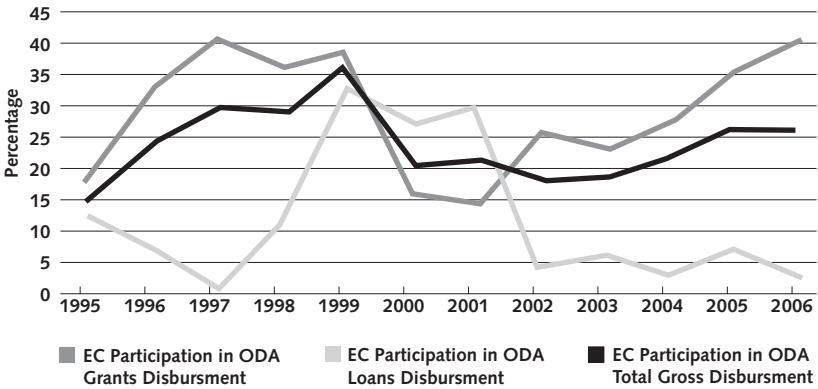
Figure 5. European Communities Participation in ODA Allocations



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of DAC OECD data

Similarly, the participation of the European Communities in the disbursement of assistance represented only a minor part of all international assistance efforts in Morocco. Therefore, the highest rate of participation in assistance disbursement was 35% in 1999. However, in following years this participation fell sharply to 20%, but since 2005 it has risen to 25%. As in the case of allocations, the European Communities' average participation in grant disbursement was higher, though it also recorded considerable increases and decreases. In consequence, 38% of participation in assistance supplied in 1999 dropped to 15% in 2000, and only in 2006 did it recover to the level of approximately 40% (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. European Communities Participation in ODA Disbursements



Source: Author’s calculations on the basis DAC OECD data

MEDA-funded projects encompassed a number of different areas; these funds were spread over 59 projects planned during 1995-2006 period, including general budget support and European Investment Bank operations (interest subsidy for loans for environmental projects and risk capital). During the MEDA I period, the EU allocated approximately €59 million to Morocco, thus the average allocation was 132 million per year. This allocation rose to some extent during MEDA II, when the EU’s allocations to Morocco totalled almost €50 million over seven years; e.g., the average allocation grew to €36 million per year. Even though the EU’s general financial allocation to Morocco was high in comparison to other Mediterranean countries, the EU faced a serious problem with supplying this aid.

The basic feature of the MEDA Programme consisted of a very slow dynamic with respect to the disbursement of allocated funds; e.g. low speed of rewards was the MEDA Programme’s main problem in contributing to reforms in Morocco. At the beginning of the MEDA

Programme, the European Commission envisaged that the average implementation period for the different measures would be approximately 4 years following the allocation of funds¹⁹. But this forecast was never accomplished, due to the number of problems related to the programming and tendering of the components of projects that delayed initial plans. In the case of Morocco one can observe a considerable level of EU allocations, set against low average annual payments. In general, in 2004 the disbursement was only €66 million of all MEDA funds allocated in the period 1995-2004, representing approximately 42.4% of MEDA allocations for this period. In detail, the level of disbursement of the MEDA I funds in 2004 was approximately 53% of allocations, and more than 32% of funds corresponded to MEDA II (see Appendix III).

The only projects that were completely accomplished from the point of view of the ratio of disbursement were Structural Adjustment Facility and European Investment Bank operations. The technical assistance projects were never fully implemented. What is more, until 1999 no MEDA I project was tendered despite the fact that the EU had approved 32 projects. During MEDA I at least two projects were cancelled (support for Mediterranean fisheries and support for the regulation and liberalisation of the telecommunications sector). As a result, payments from MEDA regulations to Morocco totalled €27 million, but €20 million corresponded to the Structural Adjustment Facility²⁰.

19. In detail, the disbursement of the Structural Adjustment Facility projects was expected to be carried out in the 2 years following the financial decision and commitment of behalf of the EU. Other projects were expected to be implemented over a longer period of time: economic transition and private sector – 3-4 years; classis development aid – 4-6 years; regional projects – 3-5 years (European Commission, 1998: 9).

20. This is 19.36% of allocated funds placed Morocco slightly below the general payments of the MEDA regulations, which are situated at a rate of 21.22%.

Therefore, the only project that was fully executed during MEDA I was the Structural Adjustment Facility, which was paid in three sums to the Moroccan budget. This project was the only one implemented according to the initial plans, due to the fact that this type of projects “have been, in the MEDA framework, the easiest to execute both for the European Commission and the beneficiary country” (Elorza, 2000: 63), since such projects require simplified implementation procedures that differ from ordinary technical assistance projects. But SAF projects were criticised by both scholars and the EU bodies. On the one hand, it was observed that these types of projects were not in consonance with the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration, while on the other, they overruled the functions of other international institutions due to the fact that the only criteria for receiving these funds consisted of undertaking the structural adjustment programme supervised by the IMF and World Bank, and in accordance with macro-economic data (Mañé Estrada and Maestro Yarza, 2001: 24). Luis Tejada Chacón claimed that these projects were designed solely in order to “buy reforms” (Tejada Chacón, 2000: 16). And finally, the Court of Auditors of the European Communities observed the lack of mechanisms of the impact evaluation of such grants, and stressed that:

“[T]he Commission does not document the basis for decisions on the global amount of a programme, nor the timing and amount of the instalments. Therefore, the rationale for these decisions is not clear. The amount of support is also not justified by linking it to the social or other costs of the reform programme” (Court of Auditors of the European Communities, 2002: 7).

Contrary to these critics, the external evaluation of the MEDA Programme commissioned by the European Commission concluded that this support delivered “impressive results” since, on the one hand, it had encouraged the Moroccan government to design a medium-term macro-economic strategy for the period 2000-2004, and on the other, it had contributed to

the “dramatic changes” in the legal, regulatory and institutional landscape in a number of economic sectors (ADE-IBM-EPU-NTUA, 2003: Appendix 7, p. 17). In fact, the SAF continued to be employed by the EU in relations with Mediterranean countries. Thus during the MEDA II period, the EU allocated almost €67 million to Morocco, in seven Structural Adjustment Facility projects; this represented almost 60% of all MEDA II funds allocated to Morocco. Nevertheless, it is hard to evaluate the effective results of these projects, since there is virtually no additional information about how the MEDA funds were used by the Moroccan authorities.

In all, the projects developed under this MEDA Programme represented an instrument that very slowly emerged as being an incentive to undertake reforms in Morocco. And in fact, it is still too early (12 years since the inception of MEDA) to evaluate its overall impact on the country’s path to transformation, and therefore, neither conditionality efficiency nor the incentives function can be assessed entirely.

Morocco’s stance toward the MEDA Programme

My analysis of Morocco’s stance toward the MEDA Programme is aimed at assessing the legitimacy of MEDA assistance. The legitimacy of the EU’s assistance assumes that it will improve the probability of achieving pursued objectives, given that it increases their efficiency. The general hypothesis is that MEDA projects will be more successful if Moroccan authorities are engaged in the different phases of assistance programming and the beneficiaries of the MEDA project assess their results as appropriate.

Co-ownership of MEDA assistance

The 2004 survey on harmonisation and the alignment of donor practices in Morocco identified several structural problems with respect to

the effectiveness of aid and government practices regarding external assistance. The overall picture of government-donor cooperation indicates, for example, a lack of governmental policy for managing the aid, a passive attitude toward coordinating donors' efforts and a low capacity for development, especially in terms of public financial management and budget planning and execution. Similarly, donors in Morocco claimed that they had problems with basing their assistance on national and sector strategies, since these were considered obsolete or not widely disseminated. However, in practice, donors tried to align their efforts with Moroccan institutional systems (OECD, 2005: 79-85). This overall context for MEDA in Morocco offers rather mixed prospects as regards Morocco's full engagement in the continued participation in the assistance process.

The MEDA Regulation provisions adopted in 1996 were rather scant regarding the participation of beneficiary countries in the process of supplying the assistance, especially in the planning and programming phases. In fact, there is only the ambiguous provision that "measures to be financed under this Regulation shall be selected by taking into account, *inter alia*, the beneficiaries' priorities, evolving needs, absorption capacity and progress toward structural reform"²¹. The MEDA Programme included certain interaction mechanisms between the EU and Moroccan interlocutors, but their performance was rather insufficient for the planning and implementation of projects that fully engaged Moroccan authorities and other stakeholders.

The programming and planning of on-going projects undertaken by the European Commission services should involve representatives of

21. Art. 5, "Regulation (EC) No. 1488/96 in financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) in the reform of economic and social structures within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership". *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 189, 30 July 1996.

beneficiary countries. The concentration of management capacities in the European Commission represented a setback for Mediterranean countries in comparison with the Financial Protocol system, where priorities and budget allocation were jointly negotiated and decided with the recipient country (Philippart, 2001: 135). Despite the fact that the MEDA planning and programming process has grave deficiencies, resulting in serious delays in supplying the aid, there are some advantages. As indicated by the Spanish ambassador to Syria, in the case of the MEDA Programme, “when continued pressure is exerted on beneficiary countries through dialogue between the Community and its government and through the technical assistance, the process is as important as the results” (Tejada Chacón, 2000: 12). In the case of Morocco, this process of common planning and programming did not work according to the provisions, which assumed the participation of beneficiary countries, since Moroccan authorities used to approach the MEDA planning similar to the projects developed in the Financial Protocols framework. In fact, once the MEDA Programme was announced in 1995, Moroccan authorities prepared the list of projects to be financed by the MEDA and the European Commission Delegation’s only programming task was to limit their number, and after that to prepare the list of EU priorities (Euchner *et al.*, 1999: 71). During MEDA II, the EU faced similar expectations in Morocco, but the process of strategic planning was accomplished by the European Commission and there is little evidence that the preparation of the Country Strategy Papers represented an interactive process for dialogue. Only on the level of specific projects was there room for negotiation of their particular aspects (Holden, 2005: 28-33).

The EU faced similar problems during the process of project implementation when, due to the contradictions in legal and administrative practices and regulations, serious controversies took place with Moroccan authorities. In addition, the implementation problems were related to the failure

of socialisation mechanisms, since “the objectives of the programme were not integrated appropriately in the beneficiary expectations” (ADE-IBM-EPU-NTUA, 2003: 33). Thus, the failure of the mechanisms for extending the sense of ownership, weak institutions, insufficient training of local authorities and lack of assistance during the project’s entire life-cycle may explain Mediterranean countries’ low level of absorption capacity. Despite the above observations, the Court of Auditors observed that different kind of projects offer distinct avenues for the involvement of beneficiaries. Thus, for example, it claimed that general budget support may encourage a sense of ownership on the part of the recipient government, “although it cannot ensure this”. On the other hand, it found that in some Moroccan projects, “a participative approach was followed *vis-à-vis* the local population, which meant that all local partners were fully involved in the whole process of preparing and implementing the local development plan” (Court of Auditors, 2006: 6).

Appropriateness of MEDA projects

The final beneficiaries of the MEDA projects are entities from the private and public sectors in Mediterranean countries, and may include political, economic, social and cultural bodies active on national, regional and local levels. These direct recipients of MEDA-funded aid usually have to interact with contractors who mainly come from EU Member States. These executive bodies (in many cases private European consultancy companies that are especially active in service-type projects encompassing technical assistance, supervision, project coordination, studies and training) have to carry out the activities aimed at fulfilling the contract signed with the European Commission. The presence of these bodies often produced reluctance among authorities and beneficiaries.

The delays observed in the implementation of the MEDA Programme in Morocco were also related with the bureaucratic conflict with Moroccan

administration. In many cases, the Moroccan authorities opposed certain EU rules concerning the procedure of EU assistance programmes, especially in the area of procurement. Moroccan authorities claimed that their dissatisfaction with the operation of the MEDA Programme was one of the main problems for bilateral relations with the EU in general. For example, during the first Association Council, Morocco expressed its concerns over the administrative aspects of the implementation of MEDA, forwarding a proposal concerning “a new vision of financial cooperation and principally the procedures for rendering MEDA more effective” (Council of the European Union, 2001: 5). On the other hand, the infrastructure and equipment projects are preferred by the Moroccan government due to the fact that companies from this country have a greater opportunity to be involved as contractors, e.g. they benefit directly from the MEDA funds, and aid sums are considerably higher.

In addition, this general preference has to do with the rather poor opinion that beneficiaries have of the appropriateness of MEDA projects and the way they are implemented. For example, as the report on coherence of EU assistance policies states:

“MEDA programmes in which Moroccan entrepreneurs have been involved were – in the eyes of employers – generally not successful. Current EU training and education programmes (*formation professionnelle*) are evaluated as extremely inefficient and slow by entrepreneurs. Some entrepreneurs describe the execution of the European support to the *mise à niveau* as a ‘drama’. (...) The main complaint is that the EU mainly negotiates these programmes with the Moroccan government and the institutions created to run these programmes are highly bureaucratic. According to the entrepreneurs, this led to bureaucratic deadlocks and a very low success rate” (Hoebink, 2005: 45).

Similarly, the Moroccan entrepreneurs and civil society representatives criticised MEDA’s approach regarding the general budget support

(“extremely inefficient”), the absence of MEDA projects in the agriculture sector, the inappropriate approach to the challenge of migration through the MEDA Programme and a lack of specific bilateral MEDA projects in the area of human rights.

The above observations suggest that a sense of the co-ownership and the appropriateness of MEDA projects is relatively low in Morocco. However, further on-ground research is required once the technical assistance projects are finalised, and comprehensive data for the overall results are available.

The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument - what prospects?

The new European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) came into force in January 2007. The ENPI was conceived as a new instrument aimed at supporting the achievement of objectives envisaged in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans agreed between the EU and most of its neighbouring countries. The adoption of the ENPI as the instrument of a new EU policy in the neighbourhood may lead to expectations that this new financial instrument will change the present framework of assistance programmes in the neighbourhood. However, it seems that this is not the case for the time being.

The ENPI is aimed at 16 neighbouring countries in the enlarged EU, including Russia and the Palestine Authority. The ENPI replaced the MEDA and TACIS Programmes (designed for Mediterranean and post-Soviet countries, respectively). And in fact this was the main reason behind the establishing of the ENPI's objectives; that is to say, the general simplification of the structure of the existing EU assistance programmes in the context of the general simplification and restructuring of EU finances envisaged for the Financial Framework 2007-2013. Will

the ENPI bring about any changes that may reduce the shortcomings of the previous assistance programmes, and specifically the shortcomings of the MEDA Programmes?

From the point of view of aspects of intra-EU coherence, it is doubtful that the ENPI will solve all the problems of determinacy between the ENP and the objectives of the financial instruments. In this sense, the ENPI maintains the declaration of broad and far-reaching objectives, not clearly linked with the ENP, but mostly linked with the existing legal foundations of relations with neighbouring countries. Initially, the rationality for the establishing of the ENPI and other assistance instruments was to reverse the logic of having “the policy dictated by the instruments”. However, in the case of the ENPI, this purpose has not been accomplished, since the relationship between ENPI objectives and the ENP is rather unclear. The scope of ENPI assistance will be the promotion of “enhanced cooperation and progressive economic integration between the European Union and partner countries and, in particular, the implementation of partnership and cooperation agreements, association agreements or other existing and future agreements”²². The ENP concept appears twice in the Preamble of the ENPI regulation. Therefore, in the body of the regulations, the primary priority is attached to the agreements, and other possible policy documents adopted by the European Commission, the European Council and ENP Action Plans. Thus, the ENPI seems to pursue broader objectives than the ENP exclusively.

The ENPI regulation envisages that the MED Committee will adopt only the Country Strategy Papers, including the National Indicative

22. “Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions for establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 310, 9 November 2006.

Programmes and the Action Programmes that establish specific financial plans. In this way, the planning and implementation procedures remain almost the same as in the case of the MEDA II regulation. And the only improvement of the ENPI Regulation is the establishing of clear foundations for cooperation at a trans-border level which until recently has been dispersed in a number of regulations that in many cases are contradictory. In order to increase intra-European coherence and assistance efficiency, the European Commission staff began the programming and planning activities long before the ENPI Regulation was adopted. In fact, DG Relex officials initiated the drafting of the Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes as early as in 2004 and 2005; that is to say, two years before the final adoption of the ENPI regulations. Due to this anticipation in planning, the Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes for 2007-2010 periods were adopted shortly after the adoption of the ENPI Regulation.

As regards the incentives offered by the European Union in the ENPI framework, the total budget grew considerably, to a total of €1.2 billion. This is approximately €2.8 billion more than the total budget of the TACIS and MEDA Programmes for the 2000-2006 period. However, the effective disbursement of ENPI funds seems to follow the path of previous programmes, since according to EU provisions for 2009, the total amount of payments for all participating countries will be approximately €32 million. The European Commission's financial plans indicated that by 2013 the level of ENPI payments will be approximately 50% of its budget. Therefore, the incentive offered by the ENPI will suffer from the weaknesses of the previous programmes; e.g., the slow speed of rewards, which in some cases does not help convince neighbouring countries to undertake reforms. And in fact, the MEDA and TACIS projects will overlap with those funded through the ENPI budget line. Regarding the conditionality mechanism, the EU is attempting to strengthen this element by publicising the so-called Governance Facility, which would provide additional funds for countries "who have made the most progress in implementing the agreed reform agenda set

out in their Action Plan” (Commission of the European Communities, 2006: 12). The European Commission has approximately €50 million a year to reward the best performing countries²³. It was announced that in 2007, the beneficiaries of this allocation were Morocco (€28 million) and Ukraine (€22 million).

Finally, regarding the aspects of ENPI co-ownership and appropriateness, it seems that the preparation of the Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes was based on the follow-up activities developed in the framework of MEDA and TACIS Programmes. Consequently, the practice of rather loosely consulting counterparts in beneficiary countries was maintained in general, though there was a greater awareness of the importance of this process in beneficiary countries. Nevertheless, this process was centralised by the European Commission, both in Brussels and in the Delegations, and only a rather limited input from the beneficiary countries was possible. In Mediterranean countries, an additional problem in implementing the ENPI project might be linked with the confusion created by the relationship between the European Neighbourhood Policy process agreed in the framework of ENP Action Plans, and the Barcelona Process, which is also about to be upgraded to the status of Union for the Mediterranean.

Conclusions

Analysing the MEDA Programme is a challenging task, for two main reasons: first, the lack of transparent and reliable data and second, the considerable delays in the implementation of the measures and projects.

23. For more about Governance Facility, see the non-paper “Principles for the Implementation of a Governance Facility Under ENPI”, source: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/governance_facility_en.pdf. (accessed 15 March 2008).

Therefore, the empirical material at the disposal of the researcher is very incomplete. Despite these obstacles, I have attempted in this paper to describe the implementation of the MEDA Programme, placing special emphasis on Morocco.

The paper argues that the factors undermining the impact of the MEDA Programme are related with the low level of intra-European coherence, specifically the low determinacy of MEDA's overall objectives, as well as a programming cycle that is slow and inefficient from the point of view of implementation dynamics. Similarly, there are MEDA projects that cover different areas which make it impossible to distinguish any clear priorities in EU assistance. On the other hand, the financial incentives offered by the MEDA funds are relatively limited, though above all, they are very slowly disbursed. In many cases, the MEDA projects have yet to bring about any results in terms of activities planned for the beneficiary institutions. Morocco is the country that seems to be the most receptive to following the proposals and political agenda forwarded by the EU, and thus "performance" conditionality was positive from the Moroccan perspective, and increased the number of MEDA allocations. Despite this relative "openness", the rewards offered by the EU arrive only after considerable delays. Finally, it seems that the process of programming and implementation did not succeed in creating the sense of co-ownership and cooperation between the representatives of the EU and Mediterranean countries. However, the question is whether a new financial instrument that replaces the MEDA Programme will improve its effectiveness. Our preliminary observations suggest that few expectations exist that the ENPI will improve the performance substantially in comparison with the MEDA Programme.

Appendix I. MEDA commitments during 1995-2006

Country	MEDA I 1995 - 1999			MEDA II 2000 - 2006			MEDA 1995 - 2006		
	Total Commitments (million €)	Average per year (million €)	Average per year per inhabitant (€)	Total Commitments (million €)	Average per year (million €)	Average per year per inhabitant (€)	Total Commitments (million €)	Average per year (million €)	Average per year per inhabitant (€)
Morocco	659	132	4.59	950	136	4.73	1,609	134	4.66
Egypt	685	137	2.15	596	85	1.33	1,281	107	1.74
Tunisia	428	86	8.93	472	67	7.02	900	75	7.98
Jordan	254	51	10.17	314	45	8.97	568	47	9.57
Algeria	164	33	1.07	338	48	1.58	502	42	1.33
Lebanon	182	36	10.41	123	18	5.02	305	25	7.72
Syria	101	20	1.25	215	31	1.91	316	26	1.58
Average MEDA Bilateral	353	71	5.51	430	61	4.37	783	65	4.94
Total MEDA Bilateral	2,473	495	-	3,008	430	-	5,481	457	-
MEDA Regional	295	59	0.37	779	155.8	0.97	1,074	90	0.56
Total MEDA	2,768	554	-	3,787	541	-	6,555	546	-

Source: Author's elaboration on the basis of ECORYS-NEI Annex VI: Statistical Annex (2005)

Appendix II. MEDA commitments per sector of intervention 1995-2004, in million €

Sectors	No. of projects		Commitments (mill. €)	
	MEDA I	MEDA II	MEDA I	MEDA II
Environment	4	3	36	50
Agriculture	8	4	112	32
Water	4	5	55	51
Infrastructure and transport	15	14	197	166
Private sector	19	12	530	265
Economic institutional support	24	31	285	693
Local development	4	3	195	67
Social sector/labour market	4	2	17	100
Education and training	6	12	229	403
Health	4	2	177	80
Culture	10	5	46	48
Information and media	3	6	73	51
Civil society and human rights	0	4	0	29
Political dialogue	4	8	53	66
Justice and police	0	4	0	85
Customs	1	1	1	96
Migration	0	1	0	5
EIB - interest subsidy	23	11	165	105
EIB - risk capital	6	7	94	168
EIB - Technical Assistance	1	0	10	0
General budget support	9	7	606	365
Total	149	142	2,881	2,925

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of ECORYS-NEI (2005: Table 2.2)

Appendix III. MEDA projects in Morocco in 1995-2006

Sector	N° of projects			Commitments (million €)				% Payments		
	MEDA I	MEDA II	MEDA II - NIP	MEDA I	MEDA II	MEDA II NIP	MEDA I (million €)	Percentage up to 2004	MEDA II up to 2004 (million €)	Percentage up to 2004
Infrastructure	5	2		127	48.00		44.12	34.74	2.70	5.63
Economic institutional support	4	1	2	14.6	6.00	20.00	7.15	48.97	0.70	11.67
Private sector	3			75.50			53.82	71.28		
Social sector	3	1		11.72	50.00		1.31	11.18	1.31	2.62
Education and training	2	1		78	61.00		33.52	42.97	11.64	19.08
Agriculture	2			49.65			1.42	2.86		
Culture	1			5			0.50	10.00		
Water	1	1	1	40	1.94	30.00	15.21	38.03	0.16	8.25
Local development	1	2	2	28.40	36.67	40.00	5.40	19.01	3.52	9.60
Environment	1	0		24			4.61	19.21		
Health	1	0		20			1.67	8.35		
Justice and Police		1			40.00				0.00	0.00
Migration		1			5.00				0.00	0.00
Human rights			1			2.00				
Civil society			1			3.00				
Structural Adjustment Facility:				120			120	100.00		
Budget support	1									
Economic institutional support		2	1		131.00	80.00			71.85	54.85
Health		1			50.00				25.25	50.50
Private sector		1			120.00				59.82	49.85
Customs		1			96.00				39.72	41.38
Infrastructure			1			90.00				
EIB-interest subsidy	4	4	1	20.43	29.79	10.00	15.87	77.68	0.00	0.00
EIB-risk capital	1	0		45			45	100.00		
MEDA total	30	19	10	659.3	675.40	275.00	349.6	53.03	216.67	32.08

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of ECORYS-NEI Appendix VI: Statistical Appendix (2005)

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