

Med Child

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2004 **Charting the Mediterranean Child**

Indicators and analysis regarding the well-being of children in the Mediterranean area



*Fondazione
Gerolamo Gaslini*

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INTRODUCTION

by Edwin Morley-Fletcher, President of Lynkeus

A Conviction and a Hope

This publication is born out of a conviction intermingled with hope, as is the international conference *Children and the Mediterranean*, within the framework of which it constitutes an initial tool made available to participants.

We find this conviction and hope shared in the recent manifesto *Europe: the dream, the choices*, published in November 2003 by Romano Prodi, the President of the European Union Commission. The latter can thus be regarded with all the more reason as a very appropriate choice to close the conference and to encourage and participate in the “launching” of the Mediterranean Institute for Childhood, a new foundation called upon to carry on the commitment undertaken here under the name of Medchild Foundation, in continuity with the conference acronym.

As we read in Prodi’s manifesto, “The Mediterranean is a crucial area for Europe and a gamble we have to take. Europe and Italy in particular will not be able to realize their potential for development fully and can never be sure of their safety until the Mediterranean has been transformed into an area of peace, stability and democracy. Only through an intense relationship with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean will it be possible to achieve full and effective control over immigration.” And if it is true that “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to weigh upon the future of this area like a boulder blocking every path of true hope,” it should also be said that “Europe must be ready to commit itself with financial and human

resources with respect to the Middle East and definitive peace between Israelis and Palestinians.”

The example of Salah al-Din

Our stubborn hope is that, within a global situation characterized in many respects by dramatic tension in the recently completed year of 2003, space can be found once again also for initiatives of Euro-Mediterranean dialogue such as the one now getting underway in Genoa with the *Children and the Mediterranean* conference and the Medchild Foundation, an approach comparable with the particular wisdom displayed in times of bitter conflict in the era of the Crusades by the great Salah al-Din, known by the Christians with great respect as Emperor Saladin.

Not only did he establish a regime of such religious tolerance as to induce the Jewish physician and philosopher Maimonides, then subjected to persecution in Spain, to move to Cairo and place himself under his protection, taking the Arab name of Ibn Maymun, he also succeeded, on reconquering Jerusalem in 1192, in concluding a peace treaty that guaranteed safety and equal opportunities both to the victors (the Muslims) and to the vanquished (the Christians), in the conviction that this would prove conducive to trade and help to consolidate a more lasting development of peaceful relations.

While Dante Alighieri probably drew on the Arabian tradition of Mohammed’s journey in the afterlife, as documented in the painstaking study *La escatología musulmana en la Divina*

Commedia by the great Arabist Miguel Asín Palacios, he nevertheless – as is known – placed him, with supine acquiescence in the climate of intolerance of the period, in a circle of Hell among the “sowers of scandal and of schism”. Significantly enough, however, he places Saladin among the virtuous non-Christians received into Limbo among the great figures of the past, alongside Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, described as “the master of all those that know”, as well as the Arabian philosophers Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averrhoës (Ibn Rushad).

“Everything is exchanged in the Mediterranean...”

The great culture of Islam, the religion of those who, by this name, express their desire for “submission to God”, ensured that the Arabs were the only ones among the many invaders of the Roman Empire not to let themselves be Romanized and then Christianized, but succeeded instead in Islamizing the entire southern shore of the Mediterranean, and for a period also a part of Spain, Portugal and Sicily. When all this area was swallowed up by the Ottoman Empire after the fall of Constantinople, followed by the Balkans, the context of religious tolerance established was to link the north, south and east of the Mediterranean still more strongly.

Described by Bernard Lewis as a “worldwide, multiethnic, multiracial, international and even intercontinental civilization”, Islam was for centuries “the leading military power” and “the first economic power of the planet”. As early as the end of Middle Ages, it had already attained “the highest level yet achieved in the civilized world in arts and sciences. The culture and technology inherited from the ancient Middle East, Greece and Persia were combined with important new inventions taken from outside, such as the manufacture and use of paper from China

and the decimal system of numbering from India (...). Moreover, in the arts and sciences of the civilized world, medieval Europe was taught by and in a certain sense depended on the Muslim world, relying on Arabic versions also for many otherwise unknown Greek works.”¹ The list of hypothesized “loans from civilization to civilization”,² of reciprocal flows, cultural filiations and relationships could, however, prove never-ending, from Avicenna, cited as we have seen by Dante, to St. Thomas Aquinas and the prohibition of usury (*ribâ*),³ from Muslim Sufism to the Spanish mysticism of the 16th century, from the *chansons de geste* and the Troubadours to the *sufaya* as a forerunner of the bill of exchange of Italian merchants and bankers,⁴ and so on. “Everything is exchanged in the Mediterranean, men, thoughts, arts of living, beliefs, ways of loving...”⁵

Seeking common pride in a Mediterranean identity as an antidote to the risk of “contact-induced cultural neuroses”

As regards this unquestionable common heritage, now constituting such a large proportion of the cultural legacy of mankind as a whole, we are convinced of the need for common pride in Mediterranean identity to be established on all the shores of this “inland sea”. In addition, there are problems of “contact-induced cultural neuroses”,⁶ which have, as we know, affected some of the countries on the northern shore so conspicuously in the past in coming to terms with their own failure to keep abreast of modern developments, and are not surprisingly manifested today through more or less accentuated forms of recrudescence, differing case by case in relation to the circumstances, in the area to the south of the Mediterranean.

The conviction prompting those who undertook to draw up this initial, embryonic report is

that crucial key importance attaches to the task of developing ever-broader knowledge of the socio-economic situations of the crucial 0-18 age group around the Mediterranean. In the belief that there can be no social investment more appropriate than that of making every effort to pinpoint the policies to be implemented so as to offer the best prospects for children and adolescents in the societies considered.

The *2002 Arab Human Development Report*, published by the United Nations Development Program together with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and entitled *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, already raises in innovative and courageous terms the question of the obstacles to development to be faced by the Arab world. The Report identifies three deficits to be made good, namely freedom, female empowerment, and human capabilities applied to knowledge.

We shall return below to the problem of the role of women in Arab society and its impact on the prospects for the development of children in the Muslim world.

As regards the first deficit, the Report has this to say: "The wave of democracy that transformed governance in most of Latin America and East Asia in the 1980s and Eastern Europe and much of Central Asia in the late 1990s has barely reached the Arab States. This freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development."

The connection between the freedom deficit and the knowledge gap

The Report also provides tables showing that, out of seven world regions, the Arab countries had the lowest freedom score in the late 1990s and also the lowest value of all for "voice" and "accountability".

There was also this painful statement: "About 65 million adult Arabs are illiterate, two thirds of them women. Illiteracy rates are much higher than in much poorer countries. This challenge is unlikely to disappear quickly. Ten million children between 6 and 15 years of age are currently out of school (...). The challenge is far more than overcoming the under-supply of knowledge to people. Equally important is overcoming the under-supply of knowledgeable people, a problem exacerbated by the low quality of education together with the lack of mechanisms for intellectual capital development and use".

We shall also return to these figures in connection with the findings of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*. Suffice it to say here, for the present, that child literacy rates as a whole are comparatively high across the Mediterranean, albeit with marked differences from region to region.

What should be pointed out here as regards the approach of the *2002 Arab Human Development Report* is the link established there between the freedom deficit and the knowledge gap. Hence the conclusions reached as regards the strategic character of some choices, including the priority issue for the Arabic world of deciding whether to go on depending on societies that are leaders in the production of knowledge or establish an effective, dynamic knowledge acquisition system of their own, In the awareness that "at the beginning of the third millennium, knowledge acquisition through education/learning and research and development and its effective use to are of crucial importance to the Arab world, whether with respect to their impact on good governance, on ensuring good health or on providing other prerequisites for material and moral well-being". With this significant corollary: "A related choice is between preserving the present institutional context that has proved unfavourable to development and moving to build an institution-

al structure that supports a social contract enabling human development”.

It is no coincidence that the *2003 Arab Human Development Report* is entitled *Building a Knowledge Society* and, in the words of UNDP Regional Director Rima Khalaf Hunaidi, takes as its starting point the premise that promoting human development in the Arab world rests on three great tasks: building, using and liberating the capabilities of the Arab people by advancing knowledge, freedom and women’s empowerment. The Director General and Chairman of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development stresses in turn that “ingraining and embedding knowledge in Arab societies is the crux of any attempt to resolve the human development crisis in the region. Knowledge is one of the key instruments of human development, be it in instituting good governance, guaranteeing health, producing the ingredients of material and moral welfare, or promoting economic growth. As such, knowledge is a vital factor of modern production and an essential determinant of productivity and competitive capacity.”

A large proportion of Islam’s most significant sociological literature also stresses these themes, while highlighting the concomitance of two divergent tendencies.

Post-Islamism, jihād and the drift into hyper-terrorism

On the one hand, some identify a break between historical, anthropological Islam and a neo-fundamentalist Islam as a paradoxical result of the process of acculturation and modernization of Muslim societies.

The *2003 Arab Human Development Report* includes this observation by Ahmad Kamal Aboulmagd: “The comprehensive nature of Islam does not mean that the texts (the Qur’an

and the Sunnah) deal with every question of life, large or small. That is not only impossible, but also unacceptable, considering the freedom which Islam left to the human mind to move, interpret and decide. The fact that Islam is eternal does not mean a ‘rigidity of its law’. It means that it is able to renew itself and to innovate in response to the movement of life and its changing modes.”

On the contrary, as the sociologist Khaled Fouad Allam points out, the action of neo-fundamentalism is twofold. On the one hand, “it uproots the dimension of culture from Islamic religious identity and decontextualizes it from its historical, theological and philosophical tradition, making it abstract and ideologized”. On the other, it uses it in order “to reject violently a modernity presented as the product of the first colonial then imperialist West, and to arrive instead at the assertion of a devastating Islamic identity amplified to the global scale that projects itself in a sort of counter-globalization.”⁷

Some have spoken in this connection of “post-Islamism”,⁸ where Islam is no longer understood as a complex phenomenon but reduced to a series of moral tenets and a rigid code of prohibitions.

This interpretation, it is pointed out, would account for the particular importance attached by young people in the Muslim world, especially in the areas where fighting is underway or has recently ended, to the term *jihād*. “The amalgamation of witness, martyrdom and holy war” characterizing it enables it to “combine in modern times the historical, political and mystical registers. A relationship could be identified between the different views of the *jihād* in contemporary Muslim societies and their degree of acculturation.”⁹

In this sense, the national political vocabulary of many Islamic countries appears to be still subject to the millenarian conception of history associated with this word, which has paved the

way for the myth of the founding of the nation and legitimized the ruling class. An entire symbolic universe is conveyed by this terminology, which proves to be ideally connected with access to Muslim citizenship itself insofar as this was traditionally obtained through warlike deeds.

Khaled Fouad Allam notes the presence in the Muslim world of a widespread popular literature based on the myth of the *mujāhid* hero and of recent bestsellers that hinge on the “notion of *jihād* as personal obligation”.

As he points out, “This sociological change, which has affected a large section of Muslim youth, has served to make up for the absence of values and social promotion in a world that sees itself as expelled from history and rejects a culture that has often rejected it.”¹⁰

This deconstruction of tradition itself can, however, produce dangerous effects in that it can constitute “the prerequisite for the existence of hyper-terrorism” to the very extent to which this “escapes the logic of ideological belonging” and finds “its identity in non-identity”. In point of fact, “the terrorist’s body is annihilated the moment his or her mission is accomplished”, and this choice has an implicit symbolic meaning of its own showing that we are in the presence of something “complex with its roots embedded in the wedding of violence and the sacred”.¹¹

Longing for *rahma*: the way of the *jadal* and information to dissolve violence

The interpretive category applied by Fatema Mernissi, another sociologist, is instead a suggestive concept of very different significance expressed in Arabic with the term *rahma*.

This is a broad concept with a range of facets including sensitivity, tenderness, and also forgiveness, everything that is “sweet and tender, nourishing and certain, like a womb. The root of *Rahma* is *rahm*, uterus. Rain is *rahma* because it

brings prosperity. The *umma*, the mythical Muslim community, overflows with *rahma* because it is the bond of love that links the members of a family and causes each member to be concerned about the fate of the others.”¹²

The protest of today’s young fundamentalists, says Fatema Mernissi, is also an “appeal to this Islam of *rahma*, where the rich in the cities are responsive to the anguish of the poor”.

The cry of these young people is thus “the lament of a child unloved by its family, excluded from modern knowledge and its sciences that promise work and dignity”. Reducing the protest of the young to a “declaration of war on the rich of the planet – i.e. once again the West – means grossly misunderstanding their distress”.

World peace and especially the strategies adopted to achieve this peace depend in part on the analysis of this anguish. “If attention is focused on the violence of fundamentalists, the strategy consists in wiping them out. If attention is focused on their anguish, their fear of being forgotten in the great banquet of knowledge, then the solution is to let them take part in this banquet.”¹³

As the sociologist notes, “The Arab countries allocate the world’s highest proportion of Gross Domestic Product to armaments (...) Let us have fewer weapons and more education. Then we will have a world in which I will love to travel, a world in whose creation I will be proud to participate. I know that there are countless millions of other people who want a world like that.”

The key role of information

According to Fatema Mernissi, the key force that will shape the Arab world will not be religion but information technology. “A new and dynamic Arab world has emerged in which our young people have instinctively adopted constant mobility, both mental and physical, as a

technique of survival, coping with divergent opinions and drawing on different cultures.” Knowledge is proving truly revolutionary because, “as Alvin Toffler rightly predicted, it is accessible also to the weakest and poorest”.

Arab satellite television is making it possible for this revolution to proceed by enabling “young people thirsting for freedom of opinion, previously held hostage by a model of educational based on obedience, to train themselves in *jadal*”, the art of argument and disputation. The introduction of this into the most popular programs was indeed the most brilliant stroke on the part of the al-Jazira team, consisting moreover of Arab men and women who are authentic media professionals with experience gained by working in the Arab section of the BBC in London.¹⁴

If extremism is to lose ground in the Arab world, this will depend on the possibility of a “mass exodus of citizens who engage in zapping every evening and desert their national television channels, where only the leader can speak, happily migrating toward dozens of satellite channels with offices in London, Dubai, Beirut or Qatar”. The information disseminated via satellite is thus “undermining the legitimacy of those who hold power and wealth, and truly proving that “knowledge is the most democratic of the sources of power”. In this sense, as Fatema Mernissi writes, what is underway is an authentic computer revolution that is altering the balance of power in the Arab world, “making young people autonomous to the point of being able to decode reality and construct identity, and turning the caryatids that still seek to play their leading role on the stage of politics into propaganda clowns”.¹⁵

In less heated tones, the *2003 Arab Human Development Report* also points out that “the last two years have seen some improvements in the Arab information environment, compared to dominant trends in past decades”, and that “the Arabic press has entered a new stage charac-

terised by dawning competition”. The official press – it is noted – can no longer ignore its new competitors. The challengers have managed to cross borders and overcome censorship barriers, using the Internet to reach farther than paper-based media. “The creation of Arabic Internet newspapers marks an important further step towards a more inclusive and pluralistic media open to young talent.”

The change underway is in any case not restricted to printed paper. As the Report of the UNDP and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development points out, television has also undergone remarkable changes over the last two years. Private Arabian channels are able to compete for news items and pictures with the strongest international television establishments, as was demonstrated clearly during the Anglo-American war on Iraq.

The hope is that all these beginnings “will widen the margins of political freedom in the Arab world, raise the quality of its media and strengthen the important relationship between good governance and the knowledge society”.¹⁶

The methodology adopted for *Charting the Mediterranean Child*

Our examination of the sociological literature that has probed the mental states of young Muslims could obviously continue at far greater length, but this is not the place.

If we have given a concise overview of these two interpretations, it is because we see the divergence between the call for the *jihād* and the longing for *rahma* as significantly encapsulating one of the initial stimuli underlying the attempted fact-finding reconnaissance initiated with the effort to draw up this first edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*. And we say “first” because the intentions of the initial founder of the Genoa-based Medchild Institute include a

commitment to repeating and improving this contribution to informed discussion on a yearly basis, making it a recurrent and fundamental product of the activity of the Mediterranean Institute for Childhood.

A particular method was adopted in preparing this first version of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*. First, the questions regarded as in need of answers were studied at length. The resulting material was then sent to the Rome-based CENSIS, an authoritative research center of long experience, responsible for 37 years for drawing up the richest and most reliable survey of the Italian situation. The researchers of this foundation were asked to have the courage and humility to prepare an initial draft and submit it to critical appraisal by a range of research centers operating across the Mediterranean.

Primarily through the extraordinary efforts of Giovanni Birindelli in supervising and coordinating all the different phases of the work, Lynkeus then revised the entire text on the basis of the extremely useful criticisms and corrections, methodological suggestions, and supplementary data furnished by the nine centers taking part in the combined effort to draw up an authentic *consensus report*. While it was obviously impossible for all the material gathered in the course of this complex cooperative endeavor to be included in this first edition, the collaboration of the different bodies and researchers unquestionably constitutes a precious legacy for the preparation of subsequent editions.

Our warmest thanks thus go to the Arab Urban Development Institute, AUDI (Riyadh), the Center for Research on Population and Health of the American University in Beirut, AUB (Beirut), the Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Enfant et la Ville, GEREV (Rabat), the Institut de la Méditerranée (Marseilles), the Centro nazionale di documentazione e analisi per l'infanzia e l'adolescenza, Istituto degli Innocenti (Florence), the Mother

Child Education Foundation, ACEV (Istanbul), the Royal Scientific Society, RSS (Amman), and the World Bank (Washington) together with the Amsterdam Institute for International Development, Amsterdam University, and the consultant Samir Farid, who helped with the final revision.

Repeatedly involved in the successive phases of complete reshuffling of the initial database, CENSIS then provided a rich and structured comment on the statistical section, which is combined with a stimulating interpretive contribution from the Institut de la Méditerranée. The essential features of both these contributions are summarized in this introduction.

The structure of the report

The aim of this work is to present an initial survey on Mediterranean children, the term "child" being understood in the conventional UN sense as corresponding to the 0-18 age group.

The map was drawn up through data gathering and comments on statistical indicators drawn from official sources and arranged into significant geographic areas.

While more numerous than usual, the countries studied can be regarded as falling within a concept of gravitation or area of extended Mediterranean influence that includes the east of the Mediterranean basin as far as the west coast of the Black Sea and the countries of the Persian Gulf.

The statistical section of this report covers six groups of indicators (related to demography, nutrition, health, education, economic factors and social aspects) and provides the most up-to-date and complete selection of figures possible.

Every diagram is accompanied by a short descriptive summary highlighting its most significant aspects. The by no means few cases in which the lack of data reaches a significant level

serve to pinpoint the countries and thematic areas on which greater effort should be concentrated so as to develop the statistical surveys indispensable to a basic knowledge of children's conditions.

Differentiated situations

Analysis of the data shows first and foremost that, in relation to the six thematic areas considered, the five geographical areas examined (the Arab Peninsula, North Africa, the east coast of the Mediterranean, East Europe and South Europe) present a range of differing situations.

Comparison of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean must be carried out in the awareness that the results are strongly influenced by certain factors. It is not in fact possible to regard the northern Mediterranean as a homogenous area without pointing out the differences in terms of socio-economic development existing within it between South Europe and East Europe (which, while displaying showing a trend toward convergence for several indicators, including the first, presents a socio-economic situation that is still in transition in many respects). Attention must also be drawn to the decision to include Turkey in the area of East Europe.

This was motivated, in a geopolitical perspective, by consideration of the long-term prospect of further expansion of the EU to include this country. Attention should also be drawn to Turkey's historical influence for centuries on the area of the Balkans as a whole, which was in fact part of the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century. The indicators considered for Turkey often differ, however, macroscopically from those for the area of East Europe, and the country's weight in terms of population (Turkey has a population of 69 million as against an average of 7 million for the other

countries of East Europe considered in the report, which have a total of 56 million inhabitants) is such as to have a marked influence on the weighted averages of the area.

For example, while the countries of East Europe considered in the report (including Turkey) have an average rate of children suffering from diarrhea equal to 25%, this drops to 9% without Turkey. Similarly, the rate of children with acute respiratory diseases drops from 10% to 2%, the birth rate (annual number of births per 1,000 population) from 16 to 10, the under-five mortality rate from 32 every 1000 live births to 19, and the rate of maternal mortality from 53 every 100,000 live births to 33.

In some cases, however, the figures for Turkey and East Europe, though substantially divergent today, tend to converge over the long period. Consider the case of the under-five population, where the average value for East Europe drops from 8% (including Turkey) to 5% without Turkey. In the projections to 2050, both these values settle around 5%. Finally, for some (primarily cultural) indicators, the figures for Turkey already appear to be in line with those of East Europe, e.g. the use of contraceptives, where both values are around 65%, and the youth literacy rate, where the difference is only one point (99% as against 98%). These indicators are examined in greater detail below.

In the same way, it is not possible to analyze the situation of the southern area of the Mediterranean without taking into consideration the case of Israel, which displays rates of development very similar to those of South Europe. It is therefore not only necessary to indicate the points of convergence and divergence between the two shores of the Mediterranean but also essential, with a view to obtaining the clearest possible overall picture, to examine and highlight the same factors within the various areas taken into consideration.

The demographic situation

On breaking the data gathered down into macro areas, we can say that there are 233 million children in the Mediterranean area in the 0-20 age group.

Of these, 65% live in the southern area of the Mediterranean and the remaining 35% in the northern (including Turkey).

The 0-20 age group accounts for over 48% of total population in the southern Mediterranean but under 28% in the north.

Inside the southern Mediterranean area, there are 70 million children aged under 20 in the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, more than 65,5 million in North Africa, and less than 17 million in the Middle East. The corresponding figures for the northern area of the Mediterranean are 43.5 million in East Europe (but only 15 million without Turkey) and over 36.5 million in South Europe.

The figures can be broken down by age group as follows.

There are 57 million children in the 0-4 age group in the Mediterranean, with 38 million in the south (over 17 million in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 4.5 million in the Middle East, and over 16 million in North Africa) and 19 million in the north (over 10 million in East Europe, but 3 million without Turkey, and about 9 million in South Europe).

There are over 58 million in the 5-9 age group in the Mediterranean, with 38.5 million in the south (about 18 million in Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, about 4 million in the Middle East, and over 16 million in North Africa) and 19.5 million in the north (over 10.5 million in East Europe, but 3.5 million without Turkey, and approximately 9 million in South Europe).

There are 60 million children in the 10-15 age group in the Mediterranean, with 39 million in the south (about 18 million in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, about 4 million in the Middle

East, and 17 million in North Africa) and 21 million in the north (over 11.5 million in East Europe, but over 4 million without Turkey, and about 9.5 million in South Europe).

There are over 57.5 million children aged 15-19 in the Mediterranean, with over 36 million in the south (over 16 million in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, about 4 million in the Middle East, and 16 million in North Africa) and 21.5 million in the north (over 11 million in East Europe, but more than 4 million without Turkey, and less than 10.5 million in South Europe).

The average total fertility rate (TFR) in the Mediterranean area is 2.7 children.

This value is 3.66 in the south and 1.64 in the north including Turkey (excluding Turkey, the TFR of the northern Mediterranean area drops to 1.4).

Inside the southern Mediterranean area, the TFR is 4.35 in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 3.73 in the Middle East, and 2.69 in North Africa. The corresponding figures for the northern Mediterranean are 1.96 in East Europe (but only 1.43 without Turkey) and 1.4 in South Europe.

Average life expectancy at birth in the Mediterranean area is 72.02 years.

This value is 68.99 in the south (67.62 in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 72.29 in the Middle East, and 69.53 in North Africa) and 75.29 (76,93 without Turkey) in the north (70.81 in East Europe, but 71.87 without Turkey, and 78.61 in South Europe).

Projections to 2050

While this set of indicators pinpoints is the present situation in the geographical areas considered, the demographic prospects appear to diverge far less in terms of trends and indeed to converge over time toward situations already

existing in the European countries, as demonstrated by the projections to 2050.

Projections for population by age group to 2050 show in fact a substantial convergence of the five geographical areas considered toward South European values.

In particular, the average values for under-five population drop in the south (the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, Middle East and North Africa) from 11-13% to 6-7% for these five macro-areas (not far from the values for South and East Europe, which settle around an average of 5% for the under-five population in both 2000 and 2050, thus remaining substantially stable or in actual fact, if we count the decimals, decreasing slightly). The under-15 population drops in the south (the values being again aggregated for macro areas) from an average of 34-38% to 18-21% (the drop in South Europe being from an average of 16% to 14%). The under-20 population drops in the south (the values being again aggregated for macro areas) from an average of 46-50% to 25-28% (the drop in South Europe being from an average of 22% to 19%).

The present demographic situation appears, however, to be somewhat differentiated in the various geographic areas and characterized by passage through different phases of what has been labeled the demographic transition.

In point of fact, the countries of the Arab Peninsula have only just entered the first phase of the demographic transition. This is characterized by a drop in the under-five mortality rate, the average being 61 per 1,000 live births (a figure strongly affected by Iraq, Iran and Yemen, which have values markedly above the average, while the values of the other countries are between 9 and 28), and an increase in life expectancy at birth (68 years), but with the average fertility rate still very high at 4.35. (This figure is, however, markedly influenced by Yemen, where a wholly disproportionate value of 7.6 is

registered against values of between 3 and 5.6 for the other countries of this area.)

The countries of North Africa and the east coast of the Mediterranean (the latter with the exception of Israel, which has values similar to those of Europe) have instead entered the second phase of demographic transition, where the fertility rate also begins to decrease, a total fertility rate of 2.96 being registered here.

Finally, the demographic transition can be regarded as complete in the countries of East Europe. The demographic situation is in fact similar to that of the European countries, with low fertility rates in line with those of South Europe (a total fertility rate of about 1.4 in both cases) that tend to balance a low under-five infant mortality rate (18.8) and high life expectancy at birth (72 years).

The Demographic Bonus

From the demographic view point, the most significant phenomenon for the Mediterranean as a whole is that of possible and desirable “vertical integration between north and south” over the next twenty years. The negative macro-economic consequences of an aging population in the European countries can thus be offset by flows of migration from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, where decreasing but still high birth rates are creating (and will continue to create over the next two decades) macro-economic tensions of an opposite character (especially on the job market). These will be attenuated in turn by migratory phenomena involving the lowest sections of the active population.

The surplus active population of the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) will thus be able to make up the “deficit” of the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. This “demographic gift” cannot,

however, continue beyond 2020, given the drop in birth rates already underway in the MENA countries.

As the comment by the Institut de la Méditerranée clearly points out, given the steady drop in birth rates in the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, and its consequences as regards a decrease in the active population, the gap existing between the birth rates of the European and the MENA countries opens up a “window of opportunity” for the Mediterranean area characterized by a complementary demographic situation in terms of active population.

The European countries, and especially those belonging to the European Union, should therefore seize the opportunity offered by this “window”, which will remain open for the next twenty years at least. This is primarily a historical opportunity to make good the deficit in terms of active population, which has now reached alarming proportions for most of the countries of West Europe and can only be reduced, if not actually eliminated, by shrewd management of migratory flows designed to alter the demographic structure of the individual countries.

Europe is in fact gradually turning into an old society with an average of 94 elderly people for every 100 minors in the 0-14 age group, a value that rises to over 100 for the countries of South Europe (127 for Italy, 110 for Greece and 107 for Spain).

Making up this deficit would have beneficial effects at both the political and economic levels. The transformation and rebalancing of the age pyramid and general demographic structure of the European countries would thus make it possible to reduce the imbalance between the active population and the population now outside the job market but still capable of affecting the political balance of each individual country with their votes.

Furthermore, taking advantage of this “win-

dow of opportunity” opened up between the two shores would also mean working toward the creation of a common Mediterranean macro area capable first and foremost of including the countries located on the basin, especially South Europe and the MENA countries, which display the most marked trends toward convergence.

In short, the countries of South Europe should take advantage of the opportunity offered by this “open window” over the next twenty years by developing political, economic and social strategies designed to foster convergence between the two shores of the Mediterranean so as to form a shared macro area and create of an authentic “Mediterranean way of life”, as CENSIS points out. At the same time, however, they must also be capable of preparing within themselves the conditions needed to ensure the success of this possible convergence of the different areas making up the Mediterranean basin.

This vertical integration would, however, not include the countries of the Gulf, which are still progressing through the initial phases of demographic transition. It is, however, foreseeable that, once the countries of North Africa and the east coast of the Mediterranean have also completed their demographic transition, “diagonal integration” will be possible between the countries of the Gulf and those of the Mediterranean basin. By that time, the latter will hopefully be united not only by shared demographic trends but also by possible forms of integration, above all in economic terms (with particular reference to the property and job markets).

For the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, a crucial problem to be resolved at the economic level will be the transition from an economy based on the exploitation of petroleum resources to one that will have to find a way of capitalizing the wealth accumulated hitherto in the development of other comparative advantages. This transition is brought closer by recent developments in research and

industry in the field of alternative energy (especially fuel cells). It is thus in this respect as well as in demographic terms that the next twenty-three years will constitute a historic “window of opportunity” for these countries. The choices they make today will determine the level of well-being and development, both economic and human, that their inhabitants will be able to enjoy in the next century.

A historical vocation to be reinterpreted

As pointed out by CENSIS, the problem of the integration of the enlarged Mediterranean area must start from analysis of the historical role performed by the Mediterranean for the populations that have crossed it over the centuries. The Mediterranean, to quote Braudel, has constituted not only a frontier in the past but also an area of exchange. It is only during the last century that it has been transformed into a place of conflict and political and ideological tension.

A “Mediterranean way of life” nevertheless exists, according to CENSIS. It will thus be worthwhile to examine the social dynamics animating this way of life, which encompasses the living conditions of Mediterranean children.

If the Mediterranean has primarily carried out a function of exchange, the fact that it has now become also, but not only, a place threatened by wars and traversed by illicit and criminal trafficking appears to divert it from its historical role. It was above all a place for exchanges between people, alongside which other important forms of exchange, especially trade and tourism, have also developed.

Apart from the exchanges that have helped to form its “way of life”, the Mediterranean is today also a place of growing imbalance in both economic and social terms.

CENSIS points out the existence of a marked dichotomy between the two shores.

The northern shore produces 90% of GDP but its population does not account for 40% of the total. The southern shore is instead characterized by a radically different situation and “forms of differentiated location of development at the sub-regional level”.

While the GDP of the South European countries is equal on average to \$22,838.19 per capita (\$24,670 for Italy followed by \$23,990 for France, \$21,190 for Cyprus, \$20,150 for Spain, \$17,440 for Greece, and \$13,360 for Malta), the situation is completely reversed for the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, ranging from an average of \$7,474.33 per capita for the countries of the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, the limiting cases being Yemen with \$790 and the United Arab Emirates with \$20,530, to an average \$6,682.66 per capita for the countries of the Middle East and \$4,422.87 for the countries of North Africa.

In overall terms, while the northern shore presents an average GDP per capita of \$15,767.76 (including the countries of East Europe, whose figure of \$6,215.11 is much closer to that of the southern countries) the southern shore presents an average GDP of about \$6,014.42.

For the respective areas taken in consideration, however, levels similar to those of South Europe are registered for the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait (\$18,700), Israel (\$19,790) and Slovenia (\$17,130).

Emigration toward the northern shore

Migratory flows could constitute one way out, at least in part.

In the first place, this is because emigration is connected with remittances. As the CENSIS report points out, these can have a positive impact on the balance of payments and also stimulate other factors such as the importation of

technological products and a rise in the living standards and consumption levels of the families of emigrants. We must, however, also take into consideration the negative effects that migration could produce, such as growing economic dependency of the beneficiary country and depriving the country of emigration of important economic and commercial activities.

Emigration alone cannot therefore, as CENSIS points out, resolve the imbalances between regions characterized by different degrees of development. The problem is rather to put forward a development model capable of producing benefits for both shores and giving the Mediterranean, located on the sidelines of globalization, "a better position in the world situation undergoing revision".

The factors of "endogenous development" accorded primary importance by CENSIS are macroeconomic equilibriums, the "flexibility of the productive system", the "exploitation of resources", "the concentration and interconnection of productive activities", "the development of basic education and professional training", "the strengthening of social cohesion", "support for small and medium enterprises", and finally "the development of an innovative environment through the diversification of the services for firms".

It is, however, essential that Europe should also open up to the Mediterranean through forms of development aid and coordination of the various policies of common interest.

The condition of women in the Mediterranean and its consequences on living conditions for children

Interesting results are also registered in the analysis of the other themes taken into consideration, revealing the particular forms taken by the impact of the conditions of economic growth

and social conditions on living conditions for children.

Mention has already been made of the importance attributed to the empowerment of women by the Arab Human Development Report. Analogously, CENSIS and the Institut de la Méditerranée both lay particular stress on the condition of women in the Mediterranean basin, especially in order to highlight the consequences as regards living conditions for children.

Action to improve the health, education and condition of women proves one of the most important challenges if we are to eliminate one of the greatest obstacles to effective convergence between the two shores of the Mediterranean. The state of children's health is in fact closely linked to that of their mothers. It is indeed one of the social conditions that most influence the life of the child.

With respect to the North European and Anglo-Saxon models, the Mediterranean model has always assigned particular importance to the family unit. The condition of women in general and mothers in particular has an immediate effect in both physical and psychological and social terms on children's well-being and a future impact on their prospects for physical, human and social development, which are irreparably marked in many cases during the first years of life.

In the countries on the southern shore, the low level of women's education often has negative effects on the state of physical and mental health of both children and babies. The data indicate an inversely proportional relationship between the levels of female education and the rates of both infant and maternal mortality.

Let us focus first of all on the figures related to maternal mortality, which range from an average of 9.46 deaths every 100,000 births for the countries of South Europe to 159.48 deaths for the countries of the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. In this latter case, the estimated

figures are in any case strongly influenced by the data for Yemen (570 deaths a year) and Iraq (250).

The situation proves to be better in the countries of the Middle East, with an annual average of 110.61 deaths, and North Africa, with an annual average of 126.68. While the average rate of maternal mortality is also rather high for the countries of East Europe (53.49), the overall estimate is strongly influenced by the figures for Turkey (70) and Albania (55).

The rates registered for Kuwait (5) and Qatar (7) are decidedly low and indeed close to the figures for South Europe, being markedly below those of Cyprus (47) and Malta (21).

All in all, we have an average maternal mortality rate of 28.18 deaths every 100,000 births for the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean (an estimate strongly influenced by the data of East Europe and especially Turkey) as against an average rate of maternal mortality of 139,36 deaths per annum for the countries on the southern shore.

Literacy Rates

A certain degree of convergence is registered between the respective areas as regards the level of education of the juvenile population.

As regards the 15-24 age group, i.e. those that are already or are about to become part of the active population, the situation ranges from almost total literacy for the countries of South Europe (99.8%) and East Europe (97.6%) to 92.41% for the Middle East and 81.74% for the countries of the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, the latter figures being negatively affected by the data for Iraq (44.6%) and Yemen (65%).

A decidedly negative situation is registered in North Africa, where an average of only 75.76% of the population aged between 15 and 24 can read and write. The only countries in this area

with literacy rates above the threshold of 90% are Libya (96.50%) and Tunisia (93.30%).

In overall terms, there is an average literacy rate of 98.86% for the 15-24 age group in the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean as against 80.22% for the countries on the southern shore.

Examination of the literacy rates by gender for the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean shows, however, that the rates of female literacy are lower than those for males, despite remarkable improvement over the last ten years.

An interesting and disturbing fact is that the rates of maternal and infant mortality are usually highest where the levels of female literacy and education are lowest.

It is possible to compare the data for macro areas. As regards the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, comparison of maternal and infant mortality rates and data for levels of education and literacy shows that an average maternal mortality rate of 139.36 a year per 100,000 live births and an average infant mortality rate of about 48.42 a year are combined with a literacy rate of 80.22% for the 15-24 age group, an average school life expectancy of under 10 years (9.78), participation in secondary education of just over 80% of the population (80.79%), and an education index of 0.67.

The best situation is registered within the macro area considered in the Middle East, where lower rates of maternal mortality (110.61) and infant mortality (24.89) are combined with the highest values for literacy and levels of education: youth literacy of 92.41%, school life expectancy of 11.04, participation in secondary education of 96.75%, and an education index of 0.79.

The worst situation is instead registered for North Africa, with youth literacy of 75.76%, school life expectancy of 10.58, participation in secondary education of 72.63%, and an educa-

tion index of 0.63. Together with these figures, however, North Africa presents rates of maternal mortality (126.68) and infant mortality (41.58) that prove lower than those of the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf (respectively 159.48 and 61.28), where, with the exception of school life expectancy, better figures are registered for literacy and education, with youth literacy of 81.74%, school life expectancy of 8.66, participation in secondary education of 85.15%, and an education index of 0.69.

The situation is completely different on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, where an average maternal mortality rate of 28,18 deaths a year per 100,000 live births and an average infant mortality rate of just over 17 (17.07) are combined with a youth literacy rate of 98.86% for the 15-24 age group, school life expectancy of 14.11 years, participation in secondary education covering nearly all the population (99.34%) and an education index of 0.89.

Attention should be drawn, however, to the disparities existing between the two southern and eastern areas, which have an impact on the overall figures.

In point of fact, if we leave aside participation in secondary education, where figures are not available for East Europe, and youth literacy, where the values differ little (97.6% for East Europe and 99.8% for South Europe), the other data show remarkable divergences between the two areas. School life expectancy is 13 years for East Europe as against 14.94 years for South Europe, and the education index 0.81 for East Europe as against 0.95 for South Europe.

The associated average rates of maternal and infant mortality prove very different in the two areas on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. While South Europe has an average maternal mortality rate of 9.46 a year and an average infant mortality rate 5.93 a year, the corresponding figures for East Europe are 53.49 and 32.12.

Consideration of the condition of women in relation to the same indicators shows, as pointed out by the Institut de la Méditerranée in its comment, an inversely proportional relationship between levels of education and maternal and infant mortality rates, low rates of education being associated with high rates of maternal and infant mortality and vice versa.

While high levels of education and low rates of maternal and infant mortality are registered in the areas on the northern shore of the Mediterranean (with the exception of East Europe, the figures for which are in any case adversely affected by the presence of Turkey), the situation is reversed in the south.

If we consider, for example, the countries where the maternal mortality rate is highest, we note that it is associated with an equally high rate of infant mortality and with low levels of female education and schooling. The figures for Iraq show a maternal mortality rate of 250, an infant mortality rate of 133, female youth literacy of 29.1%, female school life expectancy of 8 years, and female participation in secondary education of 71.4%. The figures for Yemen show a maternal mortality rate of 570, an infant mortality rate of 107, female youth literacy of 46%, and female school life expectancy of 5 years, no data being available for female participation in secondary education. The figures for Syria show a maternal mortality rate of 160, an infant mortality rate of 28, and female youth literacy of 58.2%, no data being available for female school life expectancy and female participation in secondary education. The figures for Morocco show a maternal mortality rate of 220, an infant mortality rate of 44, female youth literacy of 58.2%, and female school life expectancy of 8 years. It should also be noted that Yemen and Morocco present an education index markedly below the average for the areas to which they belong (0.49 for Yemen and 0.5 for Morocco).

Conditions of health and sanitation

The situation described above is usually associated with critical conditions of health and sanitation.

Suffice it to mention that on average about 20% of the population of the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean have no access to safe sources of drinking water and do not use iodized salt.

As regards the indicator of access to safe sources of drinking water, while coverage in the region of 100% of the population is registered in South Europe (although attention should be drawn to the scanty nature of the UNICEF figures for Malta and Cyprus), a critical situation is to be found in the other areas of the Mediterranean basin.

In all the areas considered, at least 10% of the population have no access to safe sources of drinking water, with an alarming situation registered in East Europe, where – due to the usual distorting effect produced by the preponderant weight of Turkey, combined in this case with highly critical conditions in rural areas of Romania – the overall figure is approaching 20% of the population (19.23%).

This figure proves lower than that registered for the other areas of the basin: 12.96% for the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, 14.03% for the Middle East, and 10.24% for North Africa.

The most alarming cases are found in the Arabian Peninsula with Oman, where only 39% of the population have access to water resources, and Yemen, where the far higher figure of 69% is registered.

A somewhat critical situation is also registered as regards family consumption of iodized salt, with averages of about 70% for the Arabian Peninsula (72.80%), 64% for North Africa (64.48%) and 67% for East Europe (66.87%).

The worst figures are registered for the

Middle Eastern countries, where the overall average is 53.94% of families. Once again, the most alarming figures are found in Yemen (39%), Iraq (40%) and Syria (40%).

As regards the use of contraception, there is a marked difference between South Europe, where 77.64% of the population use such methods, and the other areas. The corresponding figures are 47.64% of the population in the Arabian Peninsula (the lowest figures being registered in Iraq with 14%), 50.59% in the Middle East, 57.09% in North Africa, and 64.41% in East Europe.

While the countries to the north of the Mediterranean have on average over 5 hospital beds for every 1,000 inhabitants, this figure drops sharply to just over 1 for the countries to the south. The most alarming cases are again Yemen (0.06 hospital beds every 1,000 inhabitants) and Morocco (1), the countries which, as noted above, also register the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality as well as the lowest estimates as regards the education index and levels of education and schooling, especially for the female population.

The same holds for the number of doctors, which ranges from 316 every 100,000 inhabitants for the countries north of the basin (429 for South Europe and 163 for East Europe) to 134 for those in the south. Once again, the worst case is Yemen, with only 22 doctors every 100,000 inhabitants, followed by Tunisia with 70. Efficient care for mothers during the phases of pregnancy and the delivery would mean above all reducing the maternal and infant mortality rates and preventing the onset of serious malformations that weigh upon the child's future condition.

This appears to be borne out also by the data on children aged under 5 with acute respiratory infection (ARI) and those, again under 5, suffering from diarrhea. While no UNICEF data on ARI are available for South Europe (because

probably the figures are negligible), the values are 14.47% for the southern area of the Mediterranean (13.92% in the Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 7.5% in the Middle East and 16.7% in North Africa) and 10.31% for East Europe (which drops, however, to 2.2% if Turkey is not taken in consideration).

As regards children aged under 5 suffering from diarrhea, data are again not available for South Europe, possibly for the same reason as before. The averages registered are 13.03% for the southern area of the Mediterranean (15.62% in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 11.96% in the Middle East and 10.75% in North Africa) and an abnormally high 24.68% for East Europe, which drops, however, to 9.01% if Turkey is not included.

The figures for levels of vaccination, on the basis of the government-funded Extended Program on Immunization, are instead positive and convergent for nearly all the countries in the area (except Libya, Albania, Yemen and Lebanon)

The great differences registered as regards health systems and levels of public coverage and out-of-pocket health expenditure bear witness to the present lack of generally accepted models with respect to levels of recognized performance and economic sustainability. There is a significant overall difference in terms of total health expenditure between the northern shore of the Mediterranean, where the average is about 9% of GDP, and the southern, with an average of 4.99%.

Education

The economic growth reflected in access to education, health services, and nutrition (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) takes different forms in the different geographical areas taken into consideration.

For example, health expenditure in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula (as a percentage of GDP) is at the same level as the countries of South Europe, while expenditure on education (including in this case not only the Arabian Peninsula but also the Maghreb and the east coast of the Mediterranean) is about double.

In terms of internal composition, while in the countries of the Arabian peninsula, North Africa and the east coast of the Mediterranean expenditure on defense is over twice as high as on education and 2-5 times as high as the health budget, the situation is reversed in the countries of South and East Europe, where health expenditure is up to three times as high as spending on defense and often higher than on education.

If, as we have just seen, health expenditure is higher in the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, the picture changes considerable as regards education and defense. While the former is about 17% (17.31%) of GDP for the southern countries and only 7.88% for the northern, the latter is 16.2% for the southern Mediterranean and 5.74% for the northern.

This high level (as a percentage of GDP) of expenditure on education appears to contrast sharply with the levels of schooling achieved, which are shown to be inadequate, as we have seen, by the 2002 Arab Human Development Report.

Reference can be made above all (but not only) to the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, where the expenditure on education is clearly the highest at 18,25% of GDP, as against an overall average of 17.31% for the south of the Mediterranean. The figure of barely 7.88% of GDP registered for the north of the Mediterranean drops still further to 6.91% in the case of South Europe alone. While taking into account the great diversity of the absolute values of reference, these figures prompt a qualitative comparison that cannot fail to raise important

questions about the type of education currently provided in the Arab world and its aims.

In commenting on the analysis carried out in this connection in the Report published by the UNDP and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, *The Economist* expressed a peremptory judgment just over one year ago: "Although the Arabs spend a higher percentage of GDP on education than any other developing region, it is not, it seems, well spent. The quality of education has deteriorated pitifully, and there is a serious mismatch between the labour market and the education system."

The British weekly saw this as giving rise to many complex consequences disturbingly connected with a "pervasive Islamisation of society" charged with having "played a significant part in stifling constructive Arab thought".

As *The Economist* went on to assert, "From their schooldays onwards, Arabs are instructed that they should not defy tradition, that they should respect authority, that truth should be sought in the text and not in experience. Fear of *fawda* (chaos) and *fitna* (schism) are deeply engrained in much Arab-Islamic teaching. 'The role of thought', wrote a Syrian intellectual, 'is to explain and transmit (...) and not to search and question'. Such tenets (...) now hold sway, discouraging critical thought and innovation and helping to produce a great army of young Arabs, jobless, unskilled and embittered, cut off from changing their own societies by democratic means. Islam at least offers them a little self-respect. With so many paths closed to them, some are now turning their dangerous anger on the western world."¹⁷

With respect to this indisputable interpretation, efforts have been made in this first edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* to develop a detailed analysis of the levels of education provided. This led to the identification of a new and interesting fact in this context, namely a growing presence of the private sector, which in any case

reflects extremely different levels in the presence of public structures.

In the crucially important area of early child development (ECD), it should in fact be noted that the average rate of pre-primary private enrolment (as a percentage of total enrolment) in the Mediterranean area is now 32.29%.

This value is 48.35% for the southern Mediterranean (26.7% in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 63.58% in the Middle East and 65.84% in North Africa) and 14.88% for the northern area (17.39% without Turkey), with figures of 4.17% for East Europe (1.1% without Turkey) and 22.81% for South Europe.

The average rate of primary private enrolment (as a percentage of total enrolment) in the Mediterranean area is 9.38%. The values are 9.58% for the southern area (6.06% in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 34.5% in the Middle East and 6.94% in North Africa) and 9.17% for the northern (no figures being available for Turkey), with figures of 0.09% for East Europe and 15.88% for South Europe.

The average rate of secondary private enrolment (as a percentage of total enrolment) in the Mediterranean area is 10.99%. The values are 7.79% for the southern area (7.29% in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf, 29% in the Middle East and 3.1% in North Africa) and 14.47% for the northern (17.11% without Turkey), with figures of 3.29% for East Europe (0.19% without Turkey) and 22.74% and for South Europe.

The overall education index for the south of the Mediterranean is 0.67 (0.79 for the Middle East) as against 0.89 for the north (0.95 for South Europe). Per capita school life expectancy is nearly 10 years (9.78) for the south as against 14.11 for the north (14.94 for South Europe). Attention should be drawn to the convergence in the transition to secondary education, which is 99.34 % of the total school population in South Europe and of 96.75% in the Middle East (as

against levels of just 72.63% for North Africa and 85.15% for the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf).

The existence of such marked quantitative differences within the southern Mediterranean area would apparently make it difficult to follow the suggestion contained in the *2002 Arab Human Development Report*: “Arab education reform and the avoidance of disastrous isolation from active involvement in the world of the twenty-first century require the establishment of a supranational education authority.” It goes on to indicate the “Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, suitably strengthened, [as] the obvious choice to play a leading role in the institutional structure of a pan-Arab education-reform programme. Other Arab institutions should also be mobilized for this task, particularly the Arab development funds.”¹⁸

Economic growth and child empowerment

In addressing the problem of the differences and the prospects for convergence between north and south, CENSIS notes, alongside a gradual convergence of demographic structures and “standards of progress” between the two shores, the “persistence of strong territorial asymmetries and sharp differences in the living conditions of the children resident in the different countries situated on the basin”.

Examination of these differences leads to the identification of five distinct groups of countries characterized by a combination of income and children’s living standards.

In the first group, comprising the European countries, Israel and the oil-exporting countries of the Gulf region, high levels of wealth are associated with good living conditions for children.

An intermediate position is occupied by Saudi

Arabia, where a certain imbalance in the redistribution of the incomes and inadequate allocation of public resources have a negative effect on living conditions for children.

The third group consists of countries, especially in the Balkans, characterized by low incomes but also by low mortality rates in the child population.

The fourth group includes countries like Iraq and Yemen, where widespread poverty is combined with high infant mortality rates.

Finally, the MENA countries occupy a position midway between these last two groups.

CENSIS ends its comments on the report with two points. First, it is pointed out that “only some countries” on the southern shore have “succeeded in effectively channeling comparative economic prosperity” toward “improvements in the living conditions of the young population”. Second, the need is indicated “to reflect on the importance of supporting policies capable of reconciling the economic growth expected as a result of the processes of economic integration between the two shores of the Mediterranean (...) with the need to incorporate the fight against hardship for children into the general strategies of development, converting part of the resources into investments aimed at child empowerment.”

Ways of promoting the rights of the younger generations also through asset-based welfare mechanisms

It is our opinion that future editions of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* should focus particular attention on possible developments such as to give every child a good start in life by providing an initial capital endowment to all children at birth, to be kept in special personal welfare accounts, where it should profit from what Europeans would traditionally call the

“magic of compound interest” and should probably be called the “magic of accumulated return on investments” in this case, where young Muslims are also involved.

The starting point of this vision is an interest in more general reflection on the ways of transforming welfare systems so as to show the possible advantages to be derived from the fact that these are coming to hinge increasingly on mechanisms based on individual property rights. In this connection, it is worth recalling C.B. Macpherson’s striking and stimulating observation that the left wing’s tradition of focusing on “human rights as opposed to property rights” may have been “a mistake, and that we will get further if we treat human rights as property rights”.¹⁹

It should be borne in mind at the same time that a system based on personal welfare accounts will not necessarily have to be framed in conventional forms of property.

The initial capital-endowment should be topped up at intervals by public action and should also be added to by parents, relatives or the children themselves. This strikes us as a particularly effective way to address the deep and growing inequalities caused by the present forms of wealth redistribution, especially in relation to the formation of assets (and hence property) and the advantages and opportunities deriving therefrom.

Starting from the assumption of a positive connection between property and freedom, future editions of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* should refer in particular to studies and surveys that provide data on the growing gap in available wealth between the different sections of the population and show how the possession of adequate initial capital can have positive effects in terms of health, the chance of obtaining more qualified and better-paid work, the possibility of becoming self-employed and, last but not least, peace of mind.

There are interesting developments in the literature on welfare that deal with this asset-based approach, as exemplified by a book published in the USA in 1999 by Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, entitled *The Stakeholder Society*, and by the so-called “baby bonds” initiative launched by the Blair government in the United Kingdom in 2001.

The proposal put forward by Ackerman and Alstott is to give the United States a great new objective of social policy aimed at young people. “Each American should be entitled to a stake in his country: a one-time grant of eighty thousand dollars as he reaches early adulthood. This stake should be financed by an annual 2 percent tax levied on all the nation’s wealth... Stakeholders should be free. They may use their money for any purpose they choose: to start a business or pay for more education, to buy a house or raise a family or save for the future. But they must take responsibility for their choices. Their triumphs and blunders are their own.”²⁰

It is interesting to note that the sum thus received is, however, subject to a payback obligation. As Ackerman and Alstott explain, “Each stakeholder should take her eighty thousand dollars under conditions of trusteeship. While the stake is her property during her lifetime, her control should not extend beyond the grave. If a stakeholder is successful and dies with millions in the bank, she should not be allowed to forget the eighty thousand dollars that helped give her a start. Instead, she must first repay it into the stakeholding fund, with interest, before she may give large bequests to her children or to charities.”²¹

When cashed out in monetary terms, they add, “trusteeship will carry a big price tag. Thanks to the wonders of compound interest and increasing longevity, a stake of \$80,000 received in 2010 implies a payback obligation of about \$250,000 (in real dollars, after inflation is taken into account) when the typical American dies sixty years later in 2070.”²²

The initial individual capital endowment would thus be returned to a national fund perpetuated from one generation to the next, gradually reducing the application of the wealth tax until it could be abandoned completely. Following this logic, it would not be difficult to demonstrate in abstract terms that if one began to assign any amount of capital endowment to each citizen at birth, this would pave the way to arrive, after a certain length of time, at a situation where the need for taxation in order to redistribute income would prove to have been gradually minimized.

The above is a proposal that has triggered widespread discussion in many parts about the world, objectively framed on the largest scale, and with effects that could be fully assessed only after extending application over a span of several generations. The initiative launched in Great Britain by the Blair government consists far more modestly in the creation of a Child Trust Fund (or Baby Bond mechanism), which is an individual welfare account opened for every child at birth with an initial sum of between £400 and £800 deposited by the government. The account cannot be touched until the holder comes of age, and accrues interest until that time. Three successive government “top-ups” are made when the holder reaches the age of 5, 11 and 18, and parents can deposit further sums voluntarily. Both the initial deposit and the top-ups are subject to a progressive mechanism whereby the amount is inversely proportional to the family’s income. On turning 18, the holder thus has an initial capital of £2,000-£5,000.

Apart from any other considerations, we believe that in future an examination of public policies aimed at promoting the rights of the younger generations would be incomplete if it failed to take into account the possibility of adopting tools of capital endowment such as those outlined here.

It will therefore be important in future to consider factors with a bearing on public policies of

this type. It will be advisable to do this also in the light of the ideas put forward by specialized authors on the question of how to make growth and prosperity a realistic alternative to poverty for the majority of the inhabitants of underdeveloped countries.

Harnessing individual responsibility

Surprising though it may seem, approaches of the Ackerman-Alstott or baby-bond type, though on the cutting edge of reflection on the reforms to be introduced into the most mature welfare systems, have something essential in common with the micro-credit initiatives brilliantly set up by Mohammed Yunus with the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

While remaining within a welfare logic, these innovative approaches, which stem from the tradition of public social protection, ultimately cause welfare itself to be seen in a different way from the past. Through the mechanism of individual responsibility of personal welfare accounts, they end up making welfare more and more a sort of individual piggy bank that is encouraged and promoted by public regulations designed to foster the transfer over time of resources that will mostly be produced independently by each individual citizen.

What Yunus says about micro-credit also holds for such initiatives: “Its highest aim is to help people develop their potential. It is therefore not concerned with monetary capital but with human capital (...). It is only a tool that enables people to set their dreams free and helps the poorest and least fortunate to instill dignity, respect and meaning into their lives.”²³

Beginning to insert arguments of this type into the definition of the social protection systems operating on the southern shore of the Mediterranean could provide an opportunity for the perspectives of Euro-Mediterranean partner-

ship to take advantage of another idea put forward by Yunus: “The problem is the same all over the world. International aid generates elephantine bureaucracies everywhere, which soon become inefficient and corrupt and waste vast amounts of money. Aid was conceived on the principle that the money should go to the governments. Now, in a world that never ceases to proclaim the superiority of the market and free enterprise, the international funds do nothing but increase government spending with results that often conflict with the interests of the market economy itself (...). If we really want international aid to have an effect on the life of the poor to a greater or lesser degree, it will be necessary to reorganize the distribution network radically so that it arrives directly in the homes, and especially into the hands of the women in the poorest families.”²⁴

Formulas of “asset-based welfare” will also be able to form part of the tool kit of those who think, for example, like the Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto, that “a crucial ingredient missing in most macroeconomic programs in less developed countries is the establishment of widespread, legal property rights for the assets people hold”.²⁵

This certainly assumes particular importance at a time when a whole series of countries on the Mediterranean intend to allocate more resources to conventional forms of family allowance.

The prospects for freer circulation of talent and cross-fertilization of cultures and educational processes throughout the Mediterranean area could certainly be enhanced if student mobility to take advantage of the best opportunities were to find concrete support in Euro-Mediterranean policies to promote the rights of children and adolescents based on innovative approaches such as those outlined above.

Albeit in terms that are unquestionably more traditional as regards the types of tool adopted, the recent Euromed Report – published on 2

December 2003 by the high-level advisory group set up by the President of the European Commission and entitled *Dialogue Between Peoples and Cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean Area* – displays full awareness of the fact that “the initiation of young people into the cultural dialogue is not just about education and modernising the conditions under which it is provided in the school,” and that instead “young people must get out and about, discover the diversity of cultures by traveling, taking part in exchanges, experiencing the pleasure of crossing seas and frontiers”.

As the Euromed Report observes, “The schools engaged in learning about dialogue must practise it by talking to one another across the Mediterranean. Mobility and exchanges should not be the preserve of a university elite. If cultural dialogue is to permeate the social fabric, the school, which is at the very heart of this fabric – indeed the loom itself – must be open to discovering its counterparts overseas, for example through twinning, and must encourage its pupils to go off to meet their fellow students on the other side of the Mediterranean. Here, too, funding will be needed. We would like to see a huge mobility programme for schools in the Euro-Mediterranean region (with special emphasis on 10-12 year-olds), similar to the student mobility programmes in Europe and the Euromed Youth programme (...). This programme should provide for short-term exchanges, the allocation of funding for the costs of travel and accommodation in host families and proper supervision of the children by accompanying teachers. These exchanges, which may or may not be connected with twinning arrangements between the schools, should be genuine exchanges and should lead to flows of pupils both from the South to the North and the North to the South and between countries in the South. In order to derive the maximum benefit from these exchanges in terms of mutual knowledge they

should always be accompanied by a progressive effort to align course content and exchange teaching modules for all the subjects that combine to shape identity (culture, history, literature, religion) with a view ultimately to producing syllabuses of shared knowledge.”

The hope of those involved in drawing up this edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* is that the report to be published annually by the Medchild Foundation will also succeed in monitoring these expected developments effectively over the coming years.

Towards a comprehensive index of child well-being

The objectives assigned to the Genoa 2004 *Children and the Mediterranean* conference, which will be pursued further by the Medchild Foundation together with future editions of this report, include the ambitious goal of initiating a process for the definition and calculation of a Mediterranean Child Well-Being Index (MCWBI).

This will be the subject of a specific workshop held during the conference, which will be based on an introductory study commissioned by the Gaslini Foundation and drawn up by Prof. Jacques Van der Gaag, President of the Amsterdam Institute for International Development and Head of the Economics Faculty of Amsterdam University.

The study by Van der Gaag is divided into three parts. The first examines the initial attempts to measure the level of well-being of a population on the basis of indicators stretching beyond the strictly economic dimension. It analyzes (and indicates the limitations of) indicators such as the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) and the Human Development Index (HDI). The second part examines the child-related indicators used by international organizations

and researchers. The third part regards the original proposals for indexes of well-being for the Mediterranean child.

One of the first attempts to construct an index of well-being that went beyond the strictly economic dimension was the Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI), which takes into consideration the three indicators of infant mortality, life expectancy at age 1, and basic literacy. This has the primary defect of going to the opposite extreme of per capita GDP and taking *no* economic indicator into consideration. As Van der Gaag wittily points out, while it is possible to argue that money is not everything, it is hard to argue that money does not matter.

In 1990, 13 years after the publication of the PQLI, the UNDP brought out the Human Development Index (HDI) with the aim of providing an indicator of well-being that, while going beyond the exclusively economic dimension, did not exclude it completely. The HDI takes into consideration the three indicators of life expectancy (at age zero), literacy, and *per capita* GDP. The classification and comparison of the same set of countries with respect to the HDI and per capita GDP makes it possible to identify the countries that do most to translate available income into human development for the population (e.g. Greece, Malta, Macedonia, Bosnia and Romania) and those that do least (e.g. the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Algeria).

Subsequent fine-tuning and extension of the HDI led to a series of other indexes such as the Human Poverty Index (HPI, in the two versions of Hpi-1 for developing countries and Hpi-2 for OECD countries) and the Gender Related Development Index (GDI), which uses the same indicators as the HDI but in such a way as to pinpoint the disparities between the sexes.

An aspect to be considered with great attention regards distributive issues, not only in relation to the distribution of income but also to the

distributive effects of sectorial public policies. The HDI does not in fact take distributive variables into consideration, though it is easy to imagine the effects that various forms of distribution can have on the human development of a population as a whole.

Addressing the issue of developing an index of well-being for the Mediterranean child, the study considers the possibility of defining indicators that refer solely to children, through the definition of a “ children’s system” involving parts of the public and private health system, almost all of the education system, general measures to increase family welfare (e.g. child support, or child-friendly tax laws), children’s rights issues, and the overall state of well-being of the country (or region) where the child grows up.

Aggregate measures of child well-being

After reviewing the main indexes of well-being as regards a population in general, the second part of the study focuses on the indexes of child well-being, analyzing their characteristics and developments.

In every version, “child well-being” is a composite quantity with various, often interdependent dimensions, including the physical, mental, social and emotional. Priority is given to one dimension rather than another in accordance with the various goals pursued.

The indicators of child well-being fall within a more general effort to monitor the well-being of children. The major objectives of this monitoring include that of according priority, in the sphere of governmental agenda, to issues concerning children.

The countries most advanced in terms of monitoring child well-being are the United States and Canada, where there is in fact constant monitoring at both national and regional level within a specific institutional framework.

Unlike the USA and Canada, the Mediterranean is an area where children’s interests are handled in fragmentary and transversal fashion by different government agencies.

At the international level, the monitoring of child well-being is carried out by international organizations like UNICEF (through studies such as State of the World’s Children and the Public Policies and Social Conditions Monitoring the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, better known as the MONEE project) and UNESCO.

The studies produced by these organizations offer a comparative abundance of indicators, which are, however, seldom combined in a single aggregate index to measure child well-being.

In their review of the aggregate indexes of child well-being, the authors analyze eight, some being designed to assess child well-being at the national level and others comparing different countries. The eight indexes examined are the closest and most comprehensive representation of what is available as a tool to assess and monitor child well-being worldwide.

The argument developed by Van der Gaag can be summarized in four points.

First, there are a range of aggregate indices that measure child well-being, but most of them concentrate on a specific country. There are few indexes or studies that assess children’s well-being across developing countries, and none focus on the Mediterranean region.

Second, some of these indices focus on a specific dimension of well-being, for instance school readiness, or on a specific development stage such as early childhood. Other indices are more comprehensive and seek to cover many dimensions of well-being or the different stages of child development.

Third, the purpose of an index designed to measure child well-being at the international level can be defined very differently. Some

indices such as the Child Quality of Life, measure the ability of countries to maximize specific child development goals subject to specific resource availability, while others, like the International Index of Child Welfare, measure progress on child welfare.

Forth, some child well-being indices constitute adaptations from indices that measure the overall well-being of the population. For instance, the Child Quality of Life is based on the Quality of Life Index. Surprisingly, none have yet attempted to adapt the Human Development Index to develop a child well-being index.

Proposed alternative indexes

The final part of the study puts forward four indexes of child well-being (0-14 years). The first three – the Child Welfare Index (CWI), the Child Gender-related Development Index (CGI) and the Child Deprivation Index (CDI) – are adaptations of the HDI and its extensions (the Poverty Index and the Gender Related Development Index) and therefore based on the same statistical dimensions (health/life expectancy, education and income), albeit modified in the choice of indicators so as to represent the child population specifically.

The fourth index proposed, the Child Developmental Well-Being Index, is constructed on the basis of the literature review of current measures of child well-being and made up of two different indexes: the ECWI for children of pre-school age (0-5 years) and the o YCWI for school-age children (6 -14 years).

In the CWI, the HDI indicators have been replaced, when possible and relevant, by child-focused indicators. For the dimension of health/life expectancy, the authors have used survival rate at age five. Combined primary and secondary enrolment rates and net secondary

enrolment rates are used for the dimension of education. Per capita GDP and, where possible, child poverty rates are used as indicators of income, i.e. a decent standard of living.

The relevance of the CWI is not only external (making it possible to compare child well-being across countries) but also internal, Comparison, for the same country, of the results of this index with the HDI or per capita GDP provides an indication of children's human development with respect to the rest of the population, in the first case, and to income, in the second.

The Child Gender-related Index (CGI) is calculated in a very similar way to the GDI, which adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between boys and girls in the three dimensions. The dimension indices to are combined in such a way that they penalize differences in achievement between girls and boys resulting in an equally distributed index.

The Child Deprivation Index proposed was constructed with reference to the Hpi-1. In the case of the Child Deprivation Index, the indicators proposed are under-five mortality rate and malnutrition as an indicator of deprivation in health, the percentage of children out of school as an indicator for knowledge, and the percentage of children living in poverty as an indicator for a decent standard of living.

As regards the two indexes making up the Child Developmental Well-Being Index, the indicators proposed are the percentage of children with adequate nutrition, the percentage of children enrolled in early child development programs and survival rate by age five for the pre-school age component (the ECWI), and the 5-14 mortality rate, primary completion and child labor for the school age component (the YCWI).

After critical discussion and assessment during the *Children and the Mediterranean* conference and suitable revision, the text of Van der Gaag's study will be published by the Medchild Foundation as an initial contribution for the def-

inition and the calculation of comprehensive Mediterranean Child Well-Being Index.

This will also form an important basis for further fine-tuning and richer formulation in subsequent editions of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*, for the preparation of which it is probable that the Medchild Foundation will seek to involve a growing number of research centers operating across the Mediterranean.

The Simorgh

In his *Israele e l'Islam*,²⁶ Pietro Citati talks about what he describes as the most famous mystical poem of all time, namely *The Conference of the Birds* (*Mantiq al-tayr*) by Farād al-Din Attār, who lived in Persia between the 12th and 13th centuries.

Together with an analogous reflection by Fatema Mernissi, we can take the tale told in the poem as a message of hope for all the children of the Mediterranean area.

Nine centuries ago Attār dreamed of a wondrous planet inhabited by fantastic birds that “wanted to find themselves, to travel, but were afraid. Nevertheless, their yearning for knowledge was so strong as to transform their lives,”

In hundreds they decided to go in search of the place where it was said they could find a fabulous creature called the Simorgh. For years and years they crossed rivers and oceans to find this splendid and dazzling creature.

Many birds perished along the way. Fatigue and the elements accounted for most of the seekers. Only thirty of them succeeded in reaching the gates of the fortress of the legendary Simorgh. When they were finally received, however, awaiting them was a surprise that we can understand only if we know that in Persian *si* means “thirty” and *morgh* means “birds”:

“There, in the shining countenance of the Simorgh they saw
Themselves. With trepidation they gazed
on the Simorgh of the world
And finally had the courage to understand
That they were the Simorgh and the goal of
the journey,
They saw the Simorgh and gazed upon
themselves.”

When the thirty birds, bewildered and perplexed, asked the Simorgh to explain that strange reality, he told them “of a mirror that can reflect the whole world, with all its differences and individualities”.

The Simorgh explained what – as Fatema Mernissi says – “our leaders have still not understood eight centuries later, namely that the community, or rather the whole world, can be a mirror of individuality, and that its strength would thus be greater”.

“I am a mirror placed before your eyes,
and all those who come before my splendor
see
themselves, their sole reality”.

The Persian mystic thus saw into the heart of things, like Saint Paul when he said that we can know God only *per speculum et in aenigmate*²⁷ (“through a mirror and in darkness”). He also anticipated Feuerbach, telling us that ultimately we can only know ourselves, and in a state of uncertainty.

Today – writes Fatema Mernissi – we must succeed in making “uncertainty our homeland”. We know, however, that “the appeal to pluralism no longer needs to hide behind metaphysical allegories”. We know that it is possible “to create a new world through all the scientific advances that enable us to communicate, to enter into unlimited dialogue, to create the global mirror in which all the cultures can shine in their uniqueness”.²⁸

Another Arab poet, the Lebanese Kahlil Gibran, comes to our aid by showing us in what spirit we should look upon the children of the Mediterranean:

“Your children are not your children.
 They are the sons and daughters of Life’s
 longing for itself.
 They come through you but not from you,
 And though they are with you, yet they
 belong not to you.
 You may give them your love but not your
 thoughts,
 For they have their own thoughts.
 You may house their bodies but not their
 souls, for
 Their souls dwell in the house of tomor-
 row,
 which you cannot visit, not even in your
 dreams.
 You may strive to be like them, but seek
 not to make them like you
 For life goes not backward nor carries with
 yesterday.
 You are the bows from which your chil-
 dren as living arrows are sent forth.
 The Archer sees the mark upon the path of
 infinite,
 and He bends you with His might that His
 arrows may go swift and far.
 Let your bending in the Archer’s hand be
 for gladness;
 For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
 so He loves also the bow that is stable”²⁹.

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- 3 E. Pace, *Sociologia dell’Islam*, Carocci, Rome 1999; Shaikh Mahmud Ahmad, *Man and Mone*, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- 4 Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, Tome 2, *Les Jeux de l’Echange*, Armand Colin, Paris 1979.
- 5 F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée...*, cit.
- 6 Khaled Fouad Allam, *L’Islam globale*, Rizzoli, Milan 2002.
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- 8 *Le post-islamisme*, monographic issue of the “Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée”, no. 85-86, Edisud, Aix-en-Provence, 1999.
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- 11 Ibid.
- 12 *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (Italian translation: Giunti, Florence, 2002).
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 *Building a Knowledge Society*, cit.
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- 27 First Epistle to the Corinthians.
- 28 *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*, cit.
- 29 *The Prophet*, 1923.

