

INTRODUCTION

EDWIN MORLEY-FLETCHER

The Mediterranean mosaic: a wishful metaphor

In presenting the 2005 edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*, we must think back to January 2004, when the first report was presented and the MedChild Foundation was launched during the Children & the Mediterranean conference held in Genoa on board the *Mistral* by the Gaslini Foundation and masterfully chaired by the archbishop of Genoa, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, President of the Gaslini Foundation.

Among the many authoritative figures who spoke in the opening session, we had just heard from three in particular who should be recalled here, namely Queen Rania al-Abdullah of Jordan, who sent a personal message read to the assembly by Nidal al-Hadid, the Lord Mayor of Amman, Staffan De Mistura, the personal representative of the UN Secretary General for Lebanon, and Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, former president of the Gaslini Foundation and already installed as archbishop of Milan.

Queen Rania stated the objective of working so that all the children across the Mediterranean could be ensured “a secure base from which they can express their creativity and discover the adventures of life”. She also reminded us that the “biggest social risk facing all children in the Middle East region is conflict”.¹

Staffan De Mistura ended his address with the metaphor of the mosaic, “the finest work of art and the one most typical of the Mediterranean, which unites everyone”. As he pointed out, “The mosaic is an artwork that we see everywhere, from the Maghreb to Italy, and in all parts of the Mediterranean. But the mosaic is made up of many little stones that are all of different colours and that all count. They are, in fact, all essential. If one is missing, the mosaic is no longer perfect.”²

Cardinal Tettamanzi took a similar approach in outlining his fascinating vision of the Mediterranean as a “multiethnic condominium” that is “the result (...) of millennia of meetings and clashes, of peaceful and fertile intellectual conquests and cruel and bloody armed conquests, of arms outstretched to embrace mankind and arms stretched out or raised in terrible confrontation”, where “each of us owes something to the other, often something very important, without which we would not be what we are, but which we do not normally think about.” The marginality – he said – “experienced by the Mediterranean with the advent of the new world and the resulting westward shift of a centre of economic and cultural gravity previously regarded as immovable certainly did little to foster understanding among peoples of the area”. But now a new shift has brought the centre of gravity back to the Mediterranean. And this “new centrality” has been “given back, restored by history, as an un hoped-for opportunity for ‘a central role without dominion’, something unprecedented in the history of peoples and far more suitable than dominion for what has been the cradle of culture, art, law, faith and civilization. A role that is truly ours, if we could understand it!”

Hence the question formulated by the Cardinal: “How are we to seize this historical opportunity? Certainly not – he answered – by returning with resentful memory or misplaced nostalgia to past splendours that no longer exist or the wrongs we believe we have suffered, but by looking ahead, looking toward a future that can become ours to the extent of our generosity, while at the same time looking back on the millennia of our history so as to preserve the great treasure of civilization and use it to leaven the dough of today’s world. In a word, perhaps curious and in any case evocative but also deeply true, we are asked *to remember the future*.”³

Possible and desirable integration

Called upon on that occasion to present *Charting the Mediterranean Child 2004*, the author of these pages also indicated the need to use the rediscovery of a

(1) Conference Proceedings, *Children & the Mediterranean*, Genoa 7-9 January 2004, MedChild Institute, Genoa 2005, p. 9.

(2) Conference Proceedings, cit. p. 17.

(3) Conference Proceedings, cit. pp. 19-20.

Mediterranean identity as an antidote to the risk of “contact-induced cultural neuroses”. Reference was made to a declaration of Romano Prodi – then President of the European Commission, who delivered the closing address on the last day of the Genoa conference – describing the Mediterranean as “a crucial area for Europe, and an unavoidable challenge. Europe, and Italy in particular, cannot achieve its full development potential and cannot be sure of its own security until the Mediterranean has been transformed into an area of peace, democracy and stability “. Not least because – as Prodi asserted – “only through a close relationship with the countries on the southern rim of the Mediterranean will it be possible to arrive at full and effective control of immigration”.⁴

Backed up by the findings of the Institut de la Méditerranée in the 2004 report then being presented, the author said that, from a demographic viewpoint, the most significant phenomenon for the Mediterranean as a whole was that of possible and desirable “vertical integration between north and south” over the next twenty years. Because 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). The gap existing between the birth rates of the European and the MENA countries opens up – it was stated – a “window of opportunity” for the Mediterranean area characterized by a complementary demographic situation in terms of active population. 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 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 “window 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. The picture put forward by different speakers on the opening day of

(4) R. Prodi, *Europe: the Dream and the Choices*, Brussels 2003, p. 20.

the conference Children & the Mediterranean was thus one of hope, and one that also reflected the first edition of this report, which had just been published in January 2004.

Is the Mediterranean a boundary or an area of exchange?

The stimulus to inquire into the effective reliability of such hopes came from the address of Giuseppe De Rita, the secretary general of CENSIS, who raised a radical objection. He pointed out the need for us to have the “realism of the researchers”, to realise that, even though lines of convergence can be identified for the medium-long term, we are confronted at present with a boundary, not an area of exchange. “Trade does not exist (...) There is clearly only trade in raw materials from the south to the north. Very little indeed goes from the north to the south because this world is not considered a market, and the market is only the entry into the north, into Europe, of gas and oil, with no exchange. What finance is there in the Mediterranean apart from some transferring of money from state to state in payment for gas and oil and the much poorer trickle of remittances? If we investigate remittances, we find that they account for 20% of GDP in Egypt and 7% of GDP in Morocco. But is this finance? Is this the creation of financial mechanisms? Or is it some form of small-scale arrangement and dependency (setting up a home, buying a car to use as a taxi)? There is no finance here. And if the exchanges are neither financial nor commercial, what are they? So it comes out that the exchanges are of people. But this flow is not an exchange. Out of one and half million people arriving in Europe in the course of a year, 60%, that is nine hundred thousand, are from countries on the Mediterranean coast. This is hardly a negligible flow, nearly one million people a year. But as it arrives, this flow signals the presence of extraordinary reserves of people on the other side. The Mediterranean has ceased to be an area of exchange and become a boundary to be crossed under the upward pressure of hundreds of millions of people. (...) It is not a macro-area of convergence but a boundary. And it is a boundary rather than a frontier, something giving the sense of a possible future. It is a boundary that is rigid today, that imparts no sense of future identity, either to those of us looking toward Africa and the Middle East or to those looking toward us. The fact is that we all seek in the strangest ways to refer to our own identity and history, not to the future of a relationship.”⁵ Here we have a clear exposition of the first interpretive

(5) Conference Proceedings, cit. pp. 53-54.

challenge facing all the co-authors of this second report, *Charting the Mediterranean Child 2005*.

The croissant and the cappuccino

If we choose to take up De Rita's stimulating intellectual provocation, a whole range of historical factors could also figure as elements contributing to the tracing of a boundary between the north and the south of the Mediterranean. Nor would there be any need to think back to the most traumatic memories, like the Crusades, the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Catholic reconquest of Andalusia forty years later (which led, among other things, to the financing of Columbus's voyages and the resulting discovery of the "new world"), the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 or the Siege of Vienna in 1683.

The fact that certain boundaries are so deeply rooted as to be no longer even perceived as such can be shown quite simply by stopping for a moment to consider an apparently innocent everyday act. If we go back to the origins of a very common form of European breakfast, we become aware, to our surprise, of a frontier that reappears every day involuntarily between two worlds that seem in many other respects to participate in a broader and shared cultural context.

The croissant, which is what we are talking about, proves to have originated in the euphoria of Viennese bakers over a Christian victory. Drawing inspiration from the Turkish crescent moon, the bakers produced it to celebrate their own contribution to the withdrawal of Turkish troops from the walls of Vienna when, being awake for work, they raised the alarm and thwarted an attempt on the part of the besiegers to dig tunnels into the city by night. That culinary innovation – and *viennoiseries* is still the term currently used in France for bakeries that produce croissants – gave rise to a habit that has ended up becoming a typical European breakfast.

From a symbolic viewpoint, it can be said that Christians were thus given the daily opportunity to devour the symbol of those who hoped to subjugate them. The ritual only became complete, however, when a further addition was made. The croissant had to be dunked in a beverage derived from a few sacks of unknown beans that the Turks were known to roast and make into very bitter coffee. It is said to have been a certain Franz Georg Kolschitzky, a Viennese who had lived in Turkey and slipped through the enemy lines to lead relief forces to the city, that recognized the sacks of "dry black fodder" left behind by the fleeing Turks as coffee. He claimed them as his reward and opened central Europe's first coffee house. He also established the habit of refining the brew by filtering out the grounds, sweetening it, and adding a dash of milk. This beverage then came to be

called a "cappuccino" as a tribute to the light brown hood of the Italian Capuchin friar Marco d'Aviano, who became the confessor, friend and adviser, also on military matters, of the emperor Leopold I, and even took part in later years in the victorious campaigns for the liberation of Buda and Belgrade. D'Aviano was indeed canonized only recently, in 2002, by Pope John Paul II. The first thing many European citizens do every morning is thus to eat one of the symbols of the Islamic world dunked in a beverage that originated in booty taken when the Turkish siege of Vienna was raised over three centuries ago.

The distribution of rights

Other historical barriers, far more deeply rooted and complex, regard the importance attached to rights. We shall discuss the crucial and thorny issue of women's rights at a later stage. We offer here two examples of great divides dating back over the centuries provided by the Italian scholar Luciano Pellicani.⁶

The first comes from the observations of the Arab traveller Ibn Jubair, who noted on visiting Palestine in 1184 that his fellow believers preferred to live under the rule of the *kafirun* (infidel) because they "acted fairly".⁷ As Pellicani notes, however, it should be pointed out immediately that the conduct of the Christian rulers in the territories temporarily conquered by the Crusades "was not dictated by any superior moral code. If they governed 'fairly', it was because European society had, in the course of bitter and interminable internecine conflict, assumed a highly original political and juridical configuration. It had become 'a society distributing rights', to use the very apt definition given by the historian Amin Maalouf,"⁸ The second example is drawn from the *Muqaddima* by the great 14th-century Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, which offers what Pellicani regards as the most convincing attempt to explain the reasons that led the most brilliant and creative Arab civilization to set off down "the path of decadence and the fossilization of its institutions".⁹

Ibn Khaldun argued even then that the economic ruin of the Muslim civilisation was due to the fact that property

(6) L. Pellicani, *Jihad: le radici*, preface by G. Sartori, Luiss University Press, Rome 2004, p. 51.

(7) I. Jubair, *A través del Oriente*, Ediciones del Serbal, Barcelona 1988, p. 352.

(8) A. Maalouf, *Les Croisades vues par les Arabes*, Lattés, Paris 1983, p. 381.

(9) L. Pellicani, cit. p. 50.

rights were methodically trampled upon by rulers, who believed themselves entitled to use the goods of their subjects as they pleased, with the inevitable result of stifling all incentive to work and enterprise from the very outset. As he wrote, "Seizing private property means killing in men the will to earn more, causing them to fear that they will ultimately be stripped of the fruits of all their efforts. Once deprived of the hope of gain, they will strive no more. Attacks on private property only increase their demoralization (...) Civilization, well-being and public prosperity depend on productivity and the efforts made by men in all directions in their own interests and for their own profit. When men no longer work to earn their livings and cease all lucrative activity, the material civilization perishes and everything goes from bad to worse. The population dwindles. The country is emptied and its cities fall into ruin. The disintegration of civilization engenders that of the state, just as every change in matter is followed by change in form."¹⁰

The rentier state and the resource curse

The presence of abundant natural resources in some of the Arab countries has led over the last century to the reiteration of this ancient model in new forms. As noted even by an author such as Graham Fuller, who indeed sees this as one of the factors contributing to the failure of democracy in Arab countries, the "geopolitical reality of holding half the world's oil reserves" is not only at the root of a whole range of forms of invasive presence on the part of the West but has also led to "long-standing Western support for 'friendly tyrants' in the Middle East".¹¹

In actual fact, the "neo-patrimonialistic" attitude¹² of the ruling classes toward citizens made possible by petroleum revenues has led again to a situation of structural dependency in which, as the *Arab Human Development Report 2004* points out, "the rentier mode of production opens cracks in the fundamental relationship between citizens as a source of public tax

revenue and government. Where a government relies on financing from the tax base represented by its citizens, it is subject to questioning about how it allocates state resources. In a rentier mode of production, however, the government can act as a generous provider that demands no taxes or duties in return.

This hand that gives can also take away, and the government is therefore entitled to require loyalty from its citizens invoking the mentality of the clan."¹³ When natural resources yield large "rents", these become easy to appropriate - either by the state or by the few who control the resources' extraction. In the former case the state is relieved of the pressure to tax and has no incentive to promote the protection of property rights as a way of creating wealth. As for the country's citizens, because they are not taxed, they have little incentive and no effective mechanism by which to hold government accountable. This is why even though natural resources may seem like manna from heaven at first, providing new states the means to escape poverty and invest in development projects, such riches may also prove to be a curse. "Countries often end up poor precisely because they are oil rich. Oil and mineral wealth can be bad for growth and bad for democracy, since they tend to impede the development of institutions and values critical to open, market-based economies and political freedom: civil liberties, the rule of law, protection of property rights, and political participation."¹⁴ Hence the term "resource curse", which is gaining currency in the studies of an increasing number of scholars.¹⁵ At the same time,

(10) I. Khaldun, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, Sindbad, Paris 1978, v. 2, pp. 584-585.

(11) G.E.Fuller, *Islamist in the Arab World: the Dance around Democracy*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, September 2004, p. 6, cit. in: UNDP, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, *Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States 2005, p. 66.

(12) R. Golo, cit., p. 135.

(13) *ARHDP 2004*, cit., p. 18.

(14) Nancy Birdsall, *The Resource Curse*, Australian Financial Review, 10 September 2004.

(15) B. Bueno de Mesquita, and H. Root, *The Political Roots of Poverty: The Economic Logic of Autocracy*, National Interest, Summer 2002, pp. 27 -37; Christian Aid Report, *Fuelling Poverty: Oil, War, and Corruption*, May 2003; I. Gary and T. L. Karl, *Bottom of the Barrel: Africa 's Oil Boom and the Poor*, Catholic Relief Services, June 2003; A. Gelb, *Oil Windfalls: Blessing or Curse*, Oxford University, New York 1988; Global Witness, *Crude Awakening: The Role of Oil and Banking Industries in Angola's Civil War and the Plundering of State Assets*, London, December 1999; T. Glyfalon, T.T. Herbertsson, and G. Zoega, *A Mixed Blessing: Natural Resources and Economic Growth*, Macroeconomic Dynamics, 3 (June 1999), pp. 204-25; Karl, T., *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1997; C. Leite and J. Weidman, *Does Mother Nature Corrupt? Natural Resources, Corruption, and Economic Growth*, IMF Working Paper WP/99/85, 1999; M. Ross, *The Political Economy of the Resource Curse*, World Politics, 51 (2), 1997; Id., *Does Oil Hinder Democracy?* World Politics, 53 (April 2001), pp. 325-361; J.D. Sachs and A.M. Warner, *Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth*,

however, examination of this point must obviously not lead us to rule out the possibility that, for some time at least, enlightened rulers will succeed in spending the money thus made available wisely.

The problem of good governance

These are not, however, the only problems leading to the identification of fault lines between Europe and the Arab world. It would, of course be a mistake to indulge in “mechanical connections between Islam and despotism”.¹⁶ Such generalizations would be “similar to those that were sometimes made between Catholicism and oppression in certain Latin American countries, in Eastern Europe and in East Asia some thirty years ago. It is wrong to link Islam and oppression now as it was to bracket Catholicism with oppression then.”¹⁷

Some significance does, however, attach to the fact that the overall situation presented by the *Arab Human Development Report 2004* is such as to indicate “free societies, in their normative dimension, as fundamental contrasts with present-day Arab countries. The enormous gap that separates today’s reality and what many in the region hope for, is a source of widespread frustration and despair among Arabs about their countries’ prospects for a peaceful transition to societies enjoying freedom and good governance.”¹⁸

The report does not conceal the danger that “persisting tendencies in Arab social structures could well lead to spiralling social, economic, and political crises. Each further stage of crisis would impose itself as a new

reality, producing injustices eventually beyond control”¹⁹. Other observers are indeed also concerned that an effect may be triggered whereby “the more repressive the state becomes, the more critical the opposition within society will also become, thus pushing the state toward further repression”.²⁰

This is why, according to the report, “the Arab world is at a decisive point that does not admit compromise or complacency”²¹. In actual fact, it concludes, “if the Arab people are to have true societies of freedom and good governance, they will need to be socially innovative. Their challenge is to create a viable mode of transition from a situation where liberty is curtailed and oppression the rule, to one of freedom and good governance that minimises social upheaval and human costs, to the fullest extent possible”²². What chance is there of such a course being taken? And what risks will the entire Mediterranean area run if it is not?

Anti-western resentment

The difficulties are not only connected with the political framework and the associated economic and legal mechanisms. There are also obstacles related to mentality and the unquestionable problems deriving from the degree to which modernity has pervaded the West and spread out from it to prompt “the nightmare of the inevitability of universal Europeanization”.²³

As Pellicani observes, modernity has manifested itself as a constitutionally invasive civilization also and precisely because its central institution is the market. Because, as Karl Marx had already noted, “the market, by definition, has no frontiers. It is an institution with a planetary vocation that seeks to subject everything it finds along its way to the impersonal imperatives of catallactic logic – interests, values, beliefs, institutions, consolidated practices, etc. – and that proceeds like a huge cultural avalanche that feeds itself.”²⁴ And the market entails and constantly prompts the growing individual autonomy of all the parties acting within it. It is therefore hardly surprising that, especially after the comparative failure of “socialist” or “nationalist” attempts at modernization, there should have developed a widespread “resentment

Development Discussion Paper No. 517a, Harvard Institute for International Development, Cambridge, 1995; Id. *The Curse of Natural Resources*, *European Economic Review*, 45 (2001), pp. 827-838; S. Tsalik, *Caspian Oil Windfalls; Who Will Benefit?*, Open Society Institute, New York, 2003; *Escaping the Resource Curse: Managing Natural-Resource Revenues in Low-Income Countries*, Conference hosted by the Center on Globalization and Sustainable Development and the The Earth Institute at Columbia University, sponsored by The Open Society Institute, February 26, 2004.

(16) *AHDR 2004*, cit., p. 68.

(17) *Ibid.*

(18) *Cit.*, back cover.

(19) *Ibid.*

(20) F. Zakaria, *Democrazia senza libertà*, Rizzoli, Milan 2003, p. 154.

(21) *AHDR 2004*, back cover.

(22) *Cit.*, back cover

(23) N. Trubeckoj, *L'Europa e l'umanità*, Einaudi, Torino 1982, p. 68, cit. in L. Pellicani, cit., p. 28.

(24) L. Pellicani, cit., p. 57.

towards the West”, seen as disrupting the traditional Muslim identity and accused of “programmatically undermining the unity and cohesion of the *umma*”, or that processes of “retraditionalization prompted by excessive modernity”²⁵ should have emerged often in connection with the “impossibility of employing resources of legitimisation other than Islam”.²⁶

Islamic warnings of the risk of “final catastrophe” through “colonization of the hearts of men and women” were already being registered over seventy years ago. The real danger, noted an article in the authoritative journal *al-Fath*, “comes from the spiritual war methodically waged by Europe against the soul of eastern peoples in general and Muslims in particular, with the aid of its works of philosophy, its novels, its plays, its films and its language. The aim of this concerted action is of a psychological nature: to tear the eastern peoples away from their past.”²⁷ The perception of the predominance of failure is today being transformed into a new danger because, with terrorism, “failure is no longer located in the place that produced it but carries its burden of resentment around the world”.²⁸

There is, however, also another reading that should be placed alongside the above considerations. It is contained in a book published in November 2004 by two authoritative figures, namely Marcello Pera, the speaker of the Italian Senate, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then still a long way from becoming Pope Benedict XVI. Significantly entitled *Senza radici: Europa, relativismo, Cristianesimo, Islam* (“Rootless: Europe, Relativism, Christianity, Islam”), the book discusses relativism, which “has in some respects become the authentic religion of modern man” and is to be regarded, according to the authors, as “the greatest problem of our time”.²⁹

Marcello Pera argues that “an ill wind is blowing over Europe, namely the idea that it is sufficient to wait and problems will disappear all by themselves, that we can ride out the storm by appeasing those who threaten us. It is the same wind that was blowing in Munich in 1938.”³⁰ He asserts the need to realize the fact that “in most of the

Muslim and Arab world, groups consisting of fundamentalists, radicals and extremists (...) have declared a holy war on the West”.³¹ He not only urges Europe to take full cognisance of this reality, while not abandoning dialogue with the “Muslim countries that intend to have mutually beneficial relations of coexistence with the West”, but stresses the need to make preparations in the “awareness that dialogue is no use if one of the sides declares in advance that one thesis is as good as another”.³²

Great importance attaches to the calmness with which Cardinal Ratzinger answers these claims while managing at the same time to put forward a reading that turns the clichés radically upside-down. He starts by pointing out that in the ancient world “the countries on the Mediterranean, (...) by virtue of their cultural ties, trade, commerce and common political system, formed one authentic continent together with one another. It was only the triumphant advance of Islam in the 7th and early 8th centuries that traced a border through the Mediterranean, cutting it in half as it were, so that what had previously been one continent was now divided into three: Asia, Africa and Europe.”³³

The future Pope Benedict XVI identifies a distinctive feature of the subsequent history of the West in the foundations laid with the stance adopted at the end of the 5th century by Pope Gelasius I with respect to the Byzantine emperor Anastasius I. The object at issue was the separation and distinction of powers, and Gelasius asserted that “the unity of powers is exclusively in Christ. Because of human weakness (pride!), He separated the two ministries for later times so that no one might become unduly proud.”³⁴ Now that “Asia and Africa are also pursuing the ideal of the world forged by technology and well-being, and there too the ancient religious traditions are in a state of crisis and public life is increasingly dominated by layers of secular thought”, the Cardinal notes the emergence of “an effect in the opposite direction, namely the rebirth of Islam, due in part to the new material wealth acquired by the Muslim countries but above all to the knowledge that Islam is capable of offering a valid spiritual basis for the life of the people, a basis that seems to have been lost by the old continent of Europe, which thus appears doomed to decline and fall despite its continuing political and

(25) R. Guolo, *L'Islam è compatibile con la democrazia?*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2004, pp. 97-99.

(26) Cit., p.55.

(27) Cit. in G.E. von Grunebaum, *L'identità culturale de l'Islam*, Gallimard, Paris 1973, p. 166.

(28) R. Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2002, p. 5.

(29) M. Pera, J. Ratzinger, *Senza radici: Europa, relativismo, cristianesimo, islam*, Mondadori, Milan 2004, p. 23.

(30) M. Pera, *Il relativismo, il cristianesimo, l'Occidente*, in M. Pera, J. Ratzinger, cit. p. 41.

(31) Cit., p. 42.

(32) Cit. p. 43.

(33) J. Ratzinger, *Europa. I suoi fondamenti spirituali ieri, oggi e domani*, in M. Pera, J. Ratzinger, cit. p. 48.

(34) Cit., p. 52.

economic power.”³⁵ What then should Europe’s aim be, according to the man of the cloth shortly afterwards called upon to act as the new spiritual leader of Christianity?

The Cardinal identifies the first element as the “unconditional presentation of human dignity and human rights as values with precedence over any state jurisdiction. The fundamental rights are not created by the legislator or conferred upon citizens ‘but rather exist in their own right, presented to the legislator as facts of a higher order to be respected from the very outset’.³⁶ Taking precedence over any political action and any decision and policy, the value of human dignity derives from the Creator: only He can establish values that are grounded on the essence of man and that are inviolable. The existence of values that can be altered by no one is the true and proper guarantee of our freedom and of human greatness. The Christian faith sees in this the mystery of the Creator and of man’s condition of having been created in His image.”³⁷

The West must therefore emerge from the sort of “self-hatred” that plagues it, which “is strange and can only be regarded as something pathological. The West does make strive commendably to open itself up full of understanding to external values, but it no longer loves itself. Of its history, it now sees only what is deplorable and destructive, being no longer capable of perceiving what is great and pure. Europe needs a new – unquestionably critical and humble – acceptance of itself, if it truly wishes to survive.”³⁸

In this perspective, multiculturalism is not to be experienced as “abandonment and repudiation of what is one’s own, fleeing from one’s own things”. On the contrary, “multiculturalism cannot exist without common foundations, without points of orientation offered by its own values”. And it certainly cannot exist, the Cardinal argues, without respect for what is sacred. “This involves approaching the sacred elements of others with respect, but we can only do this if the sacred, God, is not extraneous to us. We can and must, of course, learn from what is sacred to others, but it is our duty precisely with respect to and for others to nurture in ourselves the respect for what is sacred” to us, and to show the countenance of the God who “has mercy for the poor and the weak, for widows and orphans, for outsiders; of the God who is so human that He Himself became man, a

man of sorrows, whose sufferings together with us endow sorrow with hope and dignity. If we do not do this, we not only deny the identity of Europe but also fail to provide a service for others to which they are entitled. The wholly godless attitude developed in the West is something deeply alien to the world’s cultures. They are convinced that a world without God has no future. It is thus precisely multiculturalism that calls upon us to become ourselves once again.”³⁹

Child awareness and the new media

Thus it is that, from a higher viewpoint, the divides and indeed clashes realistically highlighted by Giuseppe De Rita and many others are brought back onto the terrain of the challenges in store above for all the children of the Euro-Mediterranean countries preparing to enter the society of this dawning third millennium.

As Queen Rania of Jordan recalled with reference to the Amman Declaration in her message to the Genoa conference of 2004, no action can be more effective than the solemn commitment jointly undertaken at the end of the previous conference on *Children and the City* in 2002 “to take a qualitative leap and invest in our societies to ensure that children of all ages and stages have the best possible environment for a safe and stimulating childhood”.⁴⁰

The words of Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, remind us also of the need to aim at the cultural and spiritual enrichment of children so that they can mature fully as human beings and informed participants in a world they will also be called upon to shape. He thus adopts the line of the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations at the 27th special session on 10 May 2002, where it was in fact recognized that “*a world fit for children*” is one in which all children have “ample opportunity to develop their individual capacities”, in that full respect is guaranteed for their physical well-being and care is taken to help them grow in “safety, peace and dignity”, not least with regard to their “psychological, spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive and cultural development”.⁴¹

Moreover, it is by now largely recognized – thanks also to the persuasive teaching of Amartya Sen – that development must be seen “as a process of expanding

(35) Cit., p. 58.

(36) G. Hirsch, *Ein Bekenntnis zu den Grundwerten*, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 12, 2000.

(37) J. Ratzinger, cit., p. 67.

(38) Cit., pp. 70-71.

(39) Cit., pp. 71-72.

(40) *Proceedings*, cit. p. 7.

(41) UNICEF, *A World Fit for Children*, July 2002

substantive freedoms that people have”, and that “a variety of social institutions, related to the operation of markets, administrations, legislatures, political parties, nongovernmental organizations, the judiciary, the media and the community in general” are necessary to that end because they can “contribute to the process of development precisely through their effects on enhancing and sustaining individual freedoms”.⁴²

It is, however, clear that, in the context of the information and communication technology revolution, specific attention must be focused on the particular form of social dynamics that takes shape with access to the new media and as a result of the peculiar influence these have on shaping the awareness of the young.

In this respect, the Arab world is today going through a radical transformation also in cultural and social terms. As noted in the introduction to *Charting the Mediterranean Child 2004* in the words of Fatema Mernissi, “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”.

The Moroccan sociologist’s recent book leading readers by the hand through the streets of Marrakech and the lives of its inhabitants highlights the way in which, through the technological revolution, the city is experiencing “a peaceful revolution that attracts no media attention whatsoever because the young people involved are not violent. Their only dream is to learn languages in order to communicate with the world.”⁴³ While the author is of course referring solely to the city of Marrakech, her observations can perhaps be regarded as symptomatic of a transformation that is beginning to have a broader impact on the younger generations in the Arab countries as a whole.

The Internet and satellite TV

One of the papers in the thematic section of the 2005 edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*, entitled *The impact of the Internet and satellite TV on children in the MENA region*, by Musa Shteivi of the Royal Scientific Society, Jordan, stresses in particular that it is obviously the young who have benefited most from the introduction of the new media and especially access to

the Web. In the approach to these new tools, there is indeed often a reversal of the traditional parent-child relationship whereby it is the children that teach their parents. This is a secondary effect that should not be underestimated because the new media are coming to act as an unprecedented agent of socialization in competition and sometimes actually in conflict with the traditional channel of the family. Musa Shteivi also points out that the dissemination of the new media is, however, still slow and sporadic, and draws attention to the substantial differences registered from region to region.

The paper stresses the crucial importance attached to the distinction between the social effects that can be produced by a passive medium such as television and an interactive medium like the Internet. In point of fact, what really distinguishes the Internet from the other media is the *individual* nature of its use. Unlike the other traditional mass media (press, TV and radio), which prove far more subject to family approval – Musa Shteivi describes them as family-oriented – the Internet is an individual-oriented medium. And we must not underestimate the innovative impact of such a factor in a society in which the “unitary” or communitarian tension is very strong.

It is customary to define Muslim communities as *holistic*:⁴⁴ a community in which the primary point of reference of social ties is not the individual and his or her freedom but the relationship between individual and community, in a perspective whereby the aspirations of the individual are always subordinated to the requirements of the group. Young people and women are of course those most subject to tighter social control within the framework of this “holistic” tension. The use of the Internet and also to some extent – as will be discussed – of satellite TV stations offering “programmes (...) remarkable for their relative freedom and frankness”⁴⁵ can help to loosen the bonds of this pervasive social control.

A battle underway

The *Arab Human Development Report 2004* points out that in recent years society and the political parties have used the margins of freedom granted to the media in order to fight against corruption and the violation of human rights. It also notes, however, that in various

(42) A. Sen, *Development As Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999, p. 297.

(43) F. Mernissi, *Karawan. Dal deserto al Web*, Giunti, Firenze 2004, p. 67.

(44) See R. Guolo, *L'Islam è compatibile con la democrazia?*, cit., p. 77

(45) *AHDR 2004*, cit., p. 85

countries over the three-year period 2001-2003 a great many journalists were the targets of authentic persecution and many newspapers had their circulation blocked and their offices subjected to police raids.⁴⁶ The situation was so disturbing in many respects as to prompt, for example, Reporters sans frontières to describe the region in its 2002 report as “the second largest prison for journalists in the world”.⁴⁷ In short, censorship continues to weigh heavily on the media, albeit with ups and downs, and has indeed been tightened by the recent anti-terrorism laws and special war legislation (for the recent events in Iraq and the continual tension in Palestine). This bears witness, however, to the fact that a crucial battle is being fought on the terrain of the media and satellite broadcasting stations in particular.

An example is provided by the highly controversial reading of the Al-Jazeera phenomenon presented in a recent book by Hugh Miles. The author is very critical of the broadcasting content, full of entertainment shows imported from foreign countries, soap operas and cartoons. As regards the information programs, those of greatest interest to the young and their channel of access to knowledge, he maintains that these are regarded with great suspicion by the general population. Miles not only describes these TV stations as surviving solely through the support and funding of the great powers, but also claims that there is an authentic “conspiracy” behind Al-Jazeera to ensure the arrival of manipulated information from the front: “I met politicians, newspaper editors, journalist, writers, academics (...) as well as plenty of ordinary working men (...) but none believed the network’s news could be taken at face value. Every single one had an elaborate theory about who they thought was the real power behind the station. (...) Most Jordanians I met thought Al-Jazeera was an American-Zionist plot”.⁴⁸

Unexpected effects

While the television stations are severely limited in promoting the dissemination of freer knowledge – as a result not only of harsh censorship but also the possible manipulation of information and the choice of largely escapist material to broadcast – it is nevertheless possible

(46) Cit. pp. 84-85

(47) Ibid.

(48) Cf. Hugh Miles, *Al-Jazeera: How Arab TV Challenged the World*, p. 341. For a very different view, see also M. Hamam, *Fallūġa la martire secondo al-Jazīra e i media jihadisti*, in *Iraq Istruzioni per l’uso*, Quaderni di Limes, 2/2004.

to note increasing symptoms of TV addiction in the Arab countries. Arab children are catching up with their European or American peers as regards the length and forms of exposure to television programs that are not always particularly educational. There is an increase in cases of obesity and health problems connected with these habits as well as the dissemination of moral values alien to the society of origin, thus producing negative psychological effects through conflict with the rules and values of the traditional family. This obviously holds for the information transmitted both by television and through the Internet, which is clearly very difficult to control. The common risks of excessive Internet surfing, such as social anxiety and lack of social self-perception, are also spreading.

Interest also attaches to the gender difference in use of the Internet and the risks of exposure. First of all, there is a gap in quantitative terms, it being estimated that females account for only 10% of the young people using this medium. Secondly, there are qualitative differences regarding in particular the type of information sought on the Internet. Unlike their male contemporaries, young females – for whom the Internet could really offer a powerful tool to escape from family control – are not so interested in information or entertainment as in using the medium as a way of finding husbands.⁴⁹ They thus partly escape from and partly reproduce the traditional culture, where the choice of a husband is made indirectly through the family.

The risk of young males using the Internet as a way of “giving vent to their sexuality” is also linked to a culture whereby “women remain in any case at the center Muslim thinking and obsessions. The feminine image is twofold in Islam. Women guarantee the purity of the communitarian order but also symbolize desire and sexual disorder, the explosive potential of which must be regulated in order to avoid shattering effects on the social order.”⁵⁰ Alongside real women, there is now also a virtual approach to the female world, which may have unexpected effects.

Gender differences

Gender difference and female empowerment in particular are in any case open questions that have been under discussion for some time now. The *Arab Human Development Report 2002* included female

(49) F. Mernissi, *Karawan*, cit., p. 64..

(50) R. Guolo, *L’Islam...*, cit., pp. 84-85.

empowerment among the three deficits indicated as particular goals for effective human development. The 2004 edition of the report shows that the results achieved in this respect are very limited indeed. In particular, it is noted that women are doubly excluded: "Women are subjected to discrimination both at law and in practice and as result they tend not to participate very extensively in the public sphere."⁵¹ It may, however, be more interesting to note that both the World Values Survey of the Arab Human Development Report 2002 and the Freedom Survey published in the 2004 Report indicate that Arabs in general, be they men or women, are reluctant to accept gender equality.

Among the Muslim women fighting for a series of rights, it is in any case acknowledged that emancipation cannot take place through the denial of religious values. These values are to be understood as referring to a very broad sphere, given the particular social value of religion in the Arab countries. As Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd explains, "The specific feature of the Muslim civilization is the authority of the text. This does not mean that reason and other factors are of no importance, but that the peculiar characteristic of the Muslim civilization is the function performed by the central text, the Koran. The study of the Koran has given rise not only to theology but also to grammar, literature, jurisprudence, and history..."⁵² And it is precisely in the Koran that many women find grounds supporting their struggle. To quote Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd once again, "The problem is not Islam. One of the fundamental concerns of the Koran is female liberation (...) The Koran makes no distinctions, neither as regards the religious conduct of men and women nor as regards their punishment and reward in the afterlife."⁵³

Most women continue in any case to identify with their tradition. For Irshad Manji, whose recent work presents an authentic manifesto for a reformation of the Muslim faith, "The reality is that Islam forms a pillar of identity for millions of women. At the moment, taking religion out of the public sphere might be more than unrealistic; it might be unproductive as well."⁵⁴ The problem of female empowerment thus becomes a very complex matter when interwoven with shared cultural values and can be experienced, if stimulated invasively from outside, as the imposition of wholly alien criteria. Nevertheless, as emphasized in the introduction to last year's edition of

Charting the Mediterranean Child, the condition of women in the Mediterranean area has crucial and inevitable consequences on the living conditions of children and raises the problem of the production-reproduction of culture and norms of behaviour.

Mother-child interaction

In this year's edition, a paper by Muzeyyen Sevinç of the Marmara University, Istanbul, is devoted to the relationship of mother-child interaction. It examines various interpretations present in the international literature as applied to the particular cases of Turkey, Israel and Yugoslavia but also Italy, Spain and France. Particular interest attaches in this study to the extension of the mother-child relationship, which goes beyond the canonical functions regarding nurturance, training, control, sociability and responsiveness, and extends to far more complex interaction. Mother-child interaction becomes a whole that includes child development but also mother's aspirations for the child, parental belief and child rearing practice, short and long term goals of parents for their children, thus encompassing a set of social expectations and roles.

The same complexity, extending beyond discourse about health, fertility, and the economic situation of the family, is clearly highlighted in the paper by Maria-Àngels Roque of the Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, Barcelona, which is again published in this edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*.

The study points out the erroneous or at least limited nature of studies on young people in the Mediterranean that focus on the variables of health, fertility and the economy as self-contained rather than forming part of the general cultural context. With reference to some points developed by Ronald Inglehart⁵⁵, it is argued that there is a very close link between a society's system of beliefs and its general demographic and structural characteristics. The fertility rate can thus be explained better by studying of the values of a society than through socio-economic variables. For example it should be borne in mind, in a culturological perspective, that the variable "age" itself constitutes a cultural construct rather than a fact, being a social condition that assigns a status and a role and a cultural image that assigns a set of values, stereotypes and meanings. In this perspective, the

(51) *AHDR 2004*, cit., p. 92..

(52) Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Una vita con l'Islam*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2004, p. 65

(53) *Ibidem.*, p. 96

(54) Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 2005, p. 170

(55) R. Inglehart, *Modernization, cultural change and persistence of traditional values*, Michigan University, Chicago 2004.

family becomes primary observatory for cultural changes in society as a whole and the role of the woman, as wife and mother, is therefore to be regarded as the keystone of the existing cultural and value structure. For this reason, the education a woman receives is crucial to any understanding of the degree of cultural production or reproduction underway. As regards the sphere of the sexual distinction, it should not be forgotten that the family is the primary institution transmitting gender differences and identity.

Family, the role of women, primary socialization and sexuality thus become more important variables with respect to others that can, however, be expressed more easily at the quantitative level. It is only recently, in particular, that gender was recognized as an indicator of social development also in the Arab countries (*Conference on Population and Development*, Cairo 1994). In this sense, there is growing recognition that the when Arab women have inadequate knowledge of their own bodies, and hence of sexuality in general, this may lead them to live in a sort of prolonged infantile condition. And it is precisely this fact that allows the perpetuation of a whole series of habits and customs based on the control over the female body typical of patriarchal societies.

The segregation of the sexes still to be found in some areas of the Mediterranean does not, however, have negative effects on women alone but primarily on children and hence also on men. A process of modernization is thus urgently needed in this problem area in order to permit authentic human development.

Traditional values, cultural diversity, and intergenerational conflict

The study developed by IeMed also maintains that progress towards “modernity” should not be associated with the loss of traditional and religious values that are often not directly connected with certain ancestral practices.

The *Arab Human Development Report 2004* also stresses the need to consider and reassess the positive aspects of the traditional social structure, also including in some respects the idea of the clan. While it is true that “clannism implants submission, parasitic dependence and compliance in return for protection and benefits” and is therefore “the enemy of personal independence, intellectual daring, and the flowering of a unique and authentic human entity”, it is not, however, “an

unalloyed evil”. In point of fact, it also includes positive aspects such as “a sense of belonging to a community and the desire to put its interests first (...) that bespeaks an impressive sense of common purpose, one often stronger than that found in some modern forms of societal organization”.⁵⁶

On the other hand, the more negative aspects of clannism manifest themselves above all where political and civic institutions are weak and absent, and it is also subject to internal processes of radical transformation triggered by intergenerational conflict. The report points out that an important endogenous force eroding the binding structure of the clan is “the rise of a younger generation inclined, for various reasons, to rebel against the clannish practices of its forebears”.⁵⁷

Many authorities have drawn attention in this connection to the positive value of intergenerational conflict in the process of “cultural modernization”. Conflict in general should not be demonised, especially in view of the fact that the Mediterranean itself is place of meeting and clashes between cultures, being a bridge and a frontier at the same time.

Irshad Manji quotes some remarks made by Martin Luther King Jr. in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*: “I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension’. I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, non-violent tension which is necessary for growth...We must see the need for non-violent gadflies to create analysis and to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.”⁵⁸ On this view, it is not the presence of tensions that should cause concern but rather one their absence that reveals a complete absence of outlets for evolution and cultural transformation with the attendant risk of definitive degeneration into blind violence.

The building up of human capital and the knowledge economy

While the availability of an adequate education system obviously forms part of the female empowerment process, education also performs a more important general function in the process of building up the human

(56) *AHDR 2004*, cit., pp. 145-146.

(57) *Ibid.*

(58) Irshad Manji, cit., p. 180.

capital of the new generations. As pointed out in the paper by Carla Collicelli, Massimiliano Valerii and Francesca Lariccia of the Rome-based organization Censis for this edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*, education should foster the broadening of personal opportunities, understood as the development of individual abilities, freedom of choice, and the possibility of becoming acquainted with and adopting innovative behaviour. Apart from the question of personal opportunities, it appears evident that the development and promotion of the human capital of the younger generations should play a crucial role in the fight against poverty, understood both in economic terms and in the broader sense given to this term by the UNDP index of human poverty.

The data examined by the Censis researchers highlight some important links between variables and indicators of development. In particular, if the index of human poverty is considered in relation to the data on education, it appears evident that the two indicators are strongly correlated and inversely proportional. Another point usefully documented in the Censis report is the link between education and social development, understood as the possibility of living a healthy life in decent conditions and the absence of discrimination. This broad vision of education in relation to standards of living and economic development is suitably encapsulated in the concept of the knowledge economy. This concept is examined in the paper by Frédéric Blanc and Jean-Louis Reiffers for the Institut de la Méditerranée, Marseilles. The celebrated French scholars point out how the knowledge economy has become an object of great interest for the academic and political worlds despite the fact that it is still a fuzzy concept with respect to structure, content, and conditions of implementation. It has in fact been recognized by such major international organizations as the European Union, the World Bank and the United Nations, but there is still no very clear idea of the mechanisms that would generate conditions conducive to this type of economy.

The knowledge economy is to be understood as a process of development based on knowledge and information, similar to the successful process implemented by the “Asian Tigers”, whose sustained investment in education, research and scientific and technological specialization has enabled them to achieve a considerable increase in income and standard of living over the last thirty years. But if this is to be possible, it is vital to create a system that generates alongside education a labour market with high demand for skilled labour and people capable of management at high entrepreneurial and technical levels. This is not something that happens in the Arab countries, where the young people who do attain a high level of education also express a great desire to emigrate to other more developed areas.

The migration of less skilled labour, primarily towards the area of the Arabian Gulf (see in this connection the Gulf Research Centre paper on the effects of migration flows in the Gulf states and their consequence for young people, again published in this edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*), is thus accompanied by a considerable brain drain regarding in particular large numbers of qualified Arab professionals, and physicians first of all. If the process initiated in accordance with the logic of the knowledge economy is to operate, this will in fact entail not only the production of knowledge starting at the base of the education system but also the horizontal spreading of this knowledge, its constant renewal through a process of permanent innovation, and above all its penetration into the different sectors of administration, agriculture, industry and services.

Issues regarding the education system

In addition to these issues regarding the network dissemination of new skills, the Arab countries are unfortunately still greatly lacking as regards the quality of the education provided. In actual fact, despite the presence of increasing public investment, little improvement is being achieved in the education sector and there are still “unacceptable levels of illiteracy (approximately one third of men and half the women in 2002)”.⁵⁹ It should certainly be pointed out that in terms of total public expenditure, the allocation for education is still lower than military spending and ranges from a bare 2% to at most 10% of GDP in the different countries. In addition to the quantitative data of investment, however, there still remains the more radical qualitative problem pointed out by the *Arab Human Development Report 2003*. The report shows that Arab educational institutions, curricula, teaching and evaluation methods tend to rely on dictation and to instil submissiveness. They do not permit free dialogue and active, exploratory learning and consequently do not open the doors to freedom of thought and criticism. The social role of this type of education is thus ultimately a reproduction of the control mechanisms typical of Arab society.

The *Arab Human Development Report 2004* also quotes Muhammad Shahrou’s assertion that “we see educational curricula established on the basis of dictating knowledge, thus killing creativity and producing people who are educated but who have no opinion of their own, who will obey the ruler were he to beat them or take

(59) *AHDR 2004*, cit., p. 96.

away their money.”⁶⁰ Also cited is a study of 2001 by the Arab Institute for Human Rights pointing out that “in the majority of Arab countries (...) school books and courses reflect obvious contradictions with human rights principles as universally accepted”.⁶¹

The latest UNDP Report adds a further dilemma to the situation outlined above, namely the problematic presence in the education system of three mutually exclusive systems: the predominant government-provided public education, elite private education, and religious institutions. It is pointed out that private education mainly serves the affluent, a sector that “is expanding exponentially as a result of the deterioration of public education. Privately educated students may gain a better level of knowledge and skills and may perhaps preserve a greater measure of freedom (...) Education in this sector is often tied to foreign curricula or to foreign educational institutions and lessons are taught in a foreign language. This type of education is thus faulted at times for instilling in its students a measure of detachment from their own societies, and especially from their culture.”⁶² As we know, this is a phenomenon that, in less shattering forms and for higher age groups, is also beginning to affect the other shores of the Mediterranean to an ever-greater extent, with English being gradually established as the basic linguistic vehicle. At the same time, in some Arab countries there is also a religious education system, which attracts those who do not find a place in either public or private education. As the *Arab Human Development Report 2004* points out, “Teaching in these places is more restrictive of freedom and more reinforcing of traditional loyalties than in either of the two alternatives.” The UNDP Report maintains that the end effect of the simultaneous presence of these three systems is “the weakening of the social fabric and the narrowing of opportunities for the growth of a shared space whose common denominator is citizenship”.⁶³ In addition to its failure to provide adequate tools of critical knowledge, the education system in these countries is thus scarcely capable of creating a common sense of belonging, which could be important to strengthen the level of political participation but also to break down the close bonds of family and clan. The elitist path of private education, and in a foreign language, actually leads to fewer opportunities for the mass of students lacking the requisite financial capacity.

(60) Cit. p. 73.

(61) Cit. p. 147.

(62) Ibid.

(63) Ibid.

This dispiriting situation is reflected in the following observation taken from the *Arab Human Development Report 2004*: “From a freedom perspective, early school-leavers escape the loss of freedom that the educational system exacts but often do not preserve their freedom in full, since the apprenticeship system, especially in the manual and technical professions, is itself a rigid and authoritarian pyramid.”⁶⁴

Some element of synthesis

This publication attests to the renewed interest of the MedChild Foundation in getting the authors of the report to devote their modest efforts once again to developing, to the best of their ability and also with the collaboration of many authoritative international organizations and researchers, a “map” of the situation as regards children in the enlarged Mediterranean area taken as the frame of reference for last year’s edition.⁶⁵ *Charting the Mediterranean Child 2005* not only updates but also expands the indicators presented in the first report published on the occasion of the Genoa conference in January 2004. While a great deal remains to be done in order to complete the data that still prove unavailable or unsuitable for comparative analysis, the authors believe they can state with some pride that the MedChild Foundation’s self-assigned statutory task of providing an updated and improved version of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* every year is being concretely implemented.

The publication of this report – which gathers and seeks to interpret the most reliable homogeneous data available at the international level – offers scholars and all those taking an interest in issues regarding children in the area of reference a tool of knowledge and analysis that is willingly submitted to the critical appraisal of readers with a view to correcting any shortcomings or inaccuracies. We hope that the report can serve at the same time as a stimulus for the gathering of still more structured data on the part of those responsible. This introduction pursues two objectives with respect to the statistical section of the report: a) to summarize some points in connection with the large range of indicators

(64) Cit. p. 148.

(65) Let us recall that the term “child” is understood here in the conventional UN sense as corresponding to the 0-18 age group, and that the countries studied in this Report are those 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.

considered; b) to examine a selected set of the statistical indicators gathered here regarding the situation of children in the Mediterranean countries in order to develop a simultaneously representative and synthetic description of these data through statistical rather than geographical clustering of the Mediterranean countries. This clustering is therefore required to be both optimal in terms of a set statistical criterion and quantitatively and logically characterized in terms of certain peculiarities of the groups identified. In this attempt to summarize and exemplify some of the major results of the statistical analysis, use is made of data from the database on which the report is based. The units of analysis are the 34 countries monitored in Charting the Mediterranean Child, as listed below in Table 1. It is possible to summarize a number of points with regard to these countries grouped into macro-areas on the basis of examination of the indicators directly representing the condition of children or of indicators representing it indirectly through their influence on the overall well-being of the child's environment. We shall take into consideration five major questions serving to create an initial overall picture: 1) Where are there most children and why? 2) What relationship is there between children and migration? 3) Where do children live longer and healthier lives? 4) Where do children have most access to education and where do they achieve the best results? 5) Where do children enjoy the best standards of living?

1. Where are there most children and why?

There are approximately 210.7 million children living in the countries of the enlarged Mediterranean area (UNICEF figures of 2003 for the 0-18 population). Most of them are concentrated in the Arab Peninsula and the Gulf (64.6 million or 30.7% of the total), in North Africa

(59.4 million or 28.2% of the total), and in two sections of Europe: 38.2 million (18.1%) on the east coast (25.8 in Turkey alone) and 32.7 million (15.5%) in Southern Europe. There are also 15.7 million children (7.4% of the total) living on the southeast coast of the Mediterranean. The percentage of children with respect to total population measures their weight net of the effect of total demographic scale and can also be taken as an inverse measurement of the aging of a population. This measurement shows that the youngest societies are those of the Arab Peninsula and the Southeast Coast, where children account for 43.6% and 42.5% of total population respectively, followed by North Africa (39.7%) in an intermediate position. The societies of greatest aging (and therefore fewest children) are those of the eastern and southern coasts (respectively 29.9% and 19.1%).

Table 1 List of Countries Considered (Units of Analysis) and Macroareas of Reference

Arab Peninsula and Persian Gulf	Southeast Coast	North Africa	East Coast	Southern Europe
APPG	SEC	NA	EC	SE
. Bahrain . Iran . Iraq . Kuwait . Oman . Qatar . Saudi Arabia . United Arab Emirates . Yemen	. Israel . Jordan . Lebanon . O. Palestine . Syria	. Algeria, . Egypt, . Libya . Morocco . Tunisia	. Albania . Bosnia and Herz.na . Bulgaria . Croatia . Romania . Serbia and Montenegro . Slovenia . TFYR Macedonia . Turkey	. Cyprus . France . Greece . Italy . Malta . Spain

Table 2 Total Population, population aged 0-18 and population aged 0-5. Year 2003 (thousands)

Macroarea	Total population	Population 0-18		Population 0-5	
		thousands	% of total	thousands	% of total
APPG	148,023	64,647	43,7	18,417	12,4
SEC	36,916	15,684	42,5	4,664	12,6
NA	149,680	59,431	39,7	16,745	11,2
OC	127,878	38,238	29,9	10,105	7,9
SE	170,799	32,679	19,1	8,868	5,2

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

While the prospects for 2050 are influenced by birth, death, marriage, divorce, contraception and migration, stabilization of the child component is predicted (see point A1.11 of the statistical section). In actual fact, all the age groups maintain more or less the same weight.

These results are in line with the different levels of birth and fertility rates characterizing the areas examined. The birth rate is the ratio of births to population multiplied by one thousand, and is hence the product of interaction between two factors: propensity to have children and the age structure of the population.

The fertility rate is the average number of children per woman, age structure remaining constant. It emerges from combined analysis of the two indicators that, in relative terms, more children are born where the population is younger and there is a greater propensity to have children.

Table 3 Population 0-5 by macroarea: Projection for 2050 with respect to 2000 (thousands)

Macroarea	Population 0-5	
	Projection	Variation %
APPG	25.489	38.4
SEC	4.654	- 0.2
NA	15.115	- 9.7
OC	7.766	- 23.1
SE	7.297	- 17.7

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

Table 4. Total fertility rate and birth rate by Lynkeus macroarea. Weighted means. Weight structure: population. Year 2003

Macroarea	Total fertility rate	Birth rate
APPG	3.8	28.5
SEC	3.3	26.8
NA	3.0	24.5
OC	2.0	16.6
SE	1.5	10.4

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

2. What relationship is there between children and migration?

In the absence of age-related data on migration, it is possible to consider total flows of migration, taking this

variable as a proxy, on the assumption that the ratio of child migrants to total migrants remains constant over time.

The data of the International Migration Wall Chart 2002 (UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) provide useful indications as regards migratory processes with references to stock (for the year 2000) and flows (for the period 1995-2000) of migrants.

The countries hosting immigrants are not only the countries of Southern Europe and the rich countries of the APPG (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and, to a lesser degree, Oman) but also those of the SEC. The classic causes of immigration are interwoven in the latter area with factors of demographic policy, internal security and international policy.

The figures here are in fact particularly high, due not only to the contribution of Israel (where immigrants account for 37.4% of the population) but also to the presence of refugees, which increases the stock of immigrants in Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. In actual fact, refugees alone account for 44.8% of the population in Palestine, 32.8% in Jordan, and 11% in Lebanon.

The values for NA and OC do not appear significant, the former being negligible in terms of magnitude and the latter excessively inflated by the presence of refugees in the area of former Yugoslavia. The resulting variability in the second case is so great as to make the group average misleading.

Table 5. Stock of migrants by macroarea. Weighted means. Values: percentages of total population. Weight structure: population. Year 2000

Macroarea	Stock of migrants (weighted means of percentage values)	Stock of migrants (arithmetic means of percentage values)
SEC	21.9	30.58
APPG	9.5	33.5
SE	5.8	5.0
OC	2.4	2.8
NA	0.7	2.4

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

Analysis of net migration (immigrants - emigrants) and relative migration (with respect to the total population considered) makes it possible to describe the intensity of inward or outward flows with respect to total population and obtain some idea of the speed of the processes involved.

The countries with the most negative balances with respect to population are in East Europe and North Africa. Attention should be drawn in Europe to Albania (-19%), Bulgaria (-4.9%), Serbia and Montenegro (-1.9%) Turkey (-0.8%) and Romania (-0.5%), and in North Africa to Algeria (-1.8%), Morocco (-1.5%), Egypt (-1.2%) Tunisia (-0.8%) and Libya (-0.4%). Iran also presents a negative balance (-1,4%).

The countries with the most positive balances can be divided into two groups: countries of refugee immigration, including Bosnia (+27%), Lebanon (+2.2%) and Palestine (1.4%), and countries of “opportunity immigration”. The latter include the rich countries of the Arab Peninsula like Kuwait (+11.1%), the United Arab Emirates (+8.1%), Bahrain (6.6%), Saudi Arabia (+4.3%) and Qatar (+3.7%) as well as Cyprus (+3.9%), Greece (+3.3%), Italy (+1.7%), Malta (+1.4%) and Spain (+0.9%). It is interesting to note that in relative terms, within the sphere of the rich countries of Southern Europe, while the stock of immigrants reaches the highest levels in France, the most significant flows are registered in the countries with a shorter tradition of immigration.

The economic imbalance between the rich North and the poor South is thus combined with a demographic imbalance juxtaposing an old and stationary North with a young, migrating South. In this framework, due to the youthfulness of immigrants and their greater propensity to have children, migratory processes unquestionably play an active part in preventing the rich societies from becoming as old or old as quickly as their natural dynamics would entail.

In this connection, there is often talk of immigration as an opportunity to rejuvenate the rich societies with beneficial effects in social and economic terms. Some also insist on the acceleration of processes of integration due to the involvement of younger immigrants of the second, third, etc. generations. This must not, however, cause us to forget just how complex and difficult the process of integration is and how delicate the situation of the children of immigrants is in this context.

This holds both for the rich countries and, *a fortiori*, for those that are not rich but receive immigrants (above all refugees). It is thus necessary to formulate intake and integration policies and to accord priority to children in so doing. Such policies should be on a particularly broad scale so as to guarantee rights and opportunities and thus avoid the creation and reproduction of mechanisms of segregation in work, housing, and so on. They should be framed with particular attention to children, promoted and managed, if not conceived, with an approach that is decentralised and sectoral but integrated (education, sport, etc.).

3. Where do children live longer and healthier lives? Where do most children die and for what causes?

After examining where children are concentrated and which societies are most characterised in relative terms by their presence, we shall now go on to consider their living conditions in terms of health, education and standard of living.

Table 6. Life expectancy at birth by macroarea. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: population). Year 2003

Macroarea	Life expectancy at birth (weighted mean)	Life expectancy at birth (arithmetic mean)
APPG	67.7	70.4
NA	69.6	70.8
OC	71.6	73.1
SEC	73.7	73.8
SE	79.0	78.5

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

Table 7. Life expectancy at birth for selected areas. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: population). Year 2003

Countries and Macroareas	Life expectancy at birth (weighted mean)	Life expectancy at birth (arithmetic mean)
Yemen	60.0	60.0
Iraq	61.0	61.0
NA	69.6	70.8
Iran	70.0	70.0
Turkey	71.0	71.0
SEC	72.2	72.5
OC	72.3	73.4
APPG	72.8	73.8
SE	78.9	78.5
Israel	79.0	79.0

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

In measuring longevity, it is natural to consider life expectancy at birth (tables 6 and 7), i.e. the number of years a newborn child can be expected to live on average. Two peaks can be observed in this connection, namely the most favourable conditions in Southern Europe and the least favourable in Iraq and Yemen, followed by the countries of North Africa. On detracting the figures for Iran, Yemen and Iraq from those for the Arab Peninsula,

substantial stability can be observed in the Arab area, the Mediterranean SEC (not counting Israel) and the OC, where the most populous countries are also those with the lowest life expectancy (Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria with 71 years and Serbia with 73).

Life expectancy is, however, influenced by the laws of mortality all through life. The most significant indicators of infant mortality in the early years are the infant mortality rate and especially the under-five mortality rate, selected by UNICEF as a key indicator.

Table 8. Under-five mortality rate by macroarea. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: under-five population)

Macroarea	Weighted mean	Arithmetic mean
APPG	68.1	40.2
NA	37.8	31.8
OC	32.2	16.4
SEC	19.7	21.4
SE	4.5	4.8

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

Table 9. Under-five mortality rate for selected areas. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: under-five population)

Countries and Macroareas	Weighted mean	Arithmetic mean
Iraq	125.0	125.0
Yemen	113.0	113.0
Turkey	39.0	39.0
Iran	39.0	39.0
NA	37.8	31.8
APPG	22.6	14.2
SEC	21.9	25.2
OC	16.2	13.6
Israele	6.0	6.0
SE	4.5	4.8

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

This makes it possible to highlight the differences in terms of infant mortality between North Africa, the SEC and the OC, as well as the worrying position of Turkey within the latter. Once again we find Southern Europe at

one end of the scale and Yemen and Iraq at the other. With respect to infants (children under one year of age), there is a decrease in mortality between 1960 and 2003 with the exception of Iraq and, to a lesser degree, Yemen (see indicator A5 in the Statistical Section).

Detailed examination shows that congenital anomalies are the major cause of infant mortality, with respiratory disorders and pneumonia also playing an important part in the countries of East Europe (Romania Albania and Bulgaria) in the period 2001-2002 (see indicator C29).

Examination of children's chances of survival in the early years or in the entire course of their lives is not, however, sufficient to form an assessment of their well-being. Attention must also be focused on their state of health with reference to current conditions as well as lifestyles and external factors capable of impairing quality of life in the long term. With respect to the first question, UNICEF focuses attention on acute respiratory infections (ARI) and AIDS.

The national data on AIDS prevalence among children still present too many shortcomings and the only figures that would permit correct comparison are unfortunately calculated not for children but for pregnant women aged 15-24 (mainly limited to capital cities) or the 15-49 population. Useful information can, in any case, be drawn from the latter indicator.

While waiting for a richer harvest of statistical data to become available (efforts are also being made to estimate the number of orphans due to AIDS and their participation in education), it can be stated that the mean prevalence for adults (at the end of 2003) was 1.1 for the world as a whole, 0.3 in the MENA countries, 0.4 in the industrialized countries, 1.2 in the developing countries, and 3.2 in the least developed countries. On the basis of the national figures available, the only countries above their mean levels of reference are Italy (0.4) and Spain (0.7).

Similar considerations hold for ARI. The figures for children under 5 with ARI are 16% for the world as a whole, 12% in the MENA countries, and an estimated 16% in both the developing and the least developed countries. As regards the countries of the enlarged Mediterranean area, the only figures available suggest that there are some countries above their mean levels of reference, namely Iran (24%), Yemen (23%), Syria (18%) and Palestine (17%) and others below it, namely Turkey (12%), Egypt (10%), Tunisia (9%), Iraq (7%), Jordan (6%), Lebanon (4%), Serbia and Montenegro (3%), Bosnia Herzegovina (2%) and Albania (1%). As regards life styles and external factors affecting children's health, some partial aspects (e.g. smoking, the use of solid fuel for cooking, and the concentration of dioxin and furan in vegetables) are examined in tables in

the statistical section devoted to health, albeit on the basis of incomplete data.

4. Where do children have most access to education and where do they achieve the best results?

Table 10 shows some interesting results. In terms of primary education, a worrying situation emerges in the countries of the Arab Peninsula and reasonable levels in North Africa and the southeast coast of the Mediterranean. While these are actually better than average than those of East Europ, the latter has a higher degree of gender equality and a higher percentage of success in school completion (table 11).

Table 12, regarding secondary education, is analogous to table 10. The disparities registered between the tables with respect to classifications based on total rates stem from the fact that only gross rates are available for secondary education. Table 11 and table 13 serve to show that, at low and medium levels of education, the gender-related differences in access increase with transition from primary school to secondary school.

Table 10. Net rate of primary education: total rate and ratio of female to male rates for groups of countries. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: under-five population). Years 1998-2002

Countries and Macroareas	Tot. rate (weigh. mean)	Tot. rate (mean)	Ratio female / male rates (weigh. mean)	Ratio female/ male rates (arith. mean)
Yemen	59.0	59.0	0.66	0.66
APPG	64.0	81.0	0.94	0.98
Iran	79.0	79.0	0.98	0.98
Turkey	88.0	88.0	0.93	0.93
OC	89.9	91.7	0.99	0.99
Iraq	91.0	91.0	0.85	0.85
NA	91.4	93.6	0.96	0.97
SEC	95.8	93.7	0.97	0.98
SE	99.7	98.0	1.00	1.00
Israel	100.0	100.0	1.00	1.00

Source: World Bank data processed by Lynkeus, *World Development Report 2003*

Table 11. Percentage of primary school entrants reaching grade 5. Arithmetic and weighted means (weight structure: under-15 population). Years 1998-2001

Countries and Macroareas	% of primary school entrants reaching grade 5 (weighted mean)	% of primary school entrants reaching grade 5 (arithmetic mean)
Iraq	66.0	66.0
Yemen	86.0	86.0
Iran	94.0	94.0
SEC	94.2	95.5
APPG	94.6	95.5
NA	94.9	92.6
OC	95.9	96.6
SE	97.5	98.3
Turkey	99.0	99.0
Israel	99.0	99.0

Source: UNESCO data, processed by Lynkeus

Table 12. Gross rate of secondary education: total rate and ration between female and male rates for groups of countries. Weighted means (weight structure: population under 18). Anni 1998-2002

Countries and Macroarea	Total rate (weighted mean)	Ratio of female to male rates (weighted mean)
Iraq	38.0	0.62
Yemen	46.0	0.42
SEC	60.9	0.96
APPG	72.2	0.92
NA	75.64	0.94
Turkey	76.0	0.77
Iran	77.0	0.95
OC	86.5	1.01
Israel	95.0	0.99
SE	105.3	1.01

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

Table 13. Disparity in school access. Weighted means. Years 1998-2002

Countries and Macroareas	Ratio female/male enrolment in primary school	Ratio female/male enrolment in secondary school
Yemen	0.66	0.42
Iraq	0.85	0.62
Turkey	0.93	0.77
APPG	0.94	0.92
NA	0.96	0.94
Iran	0.98	0.95
SEC	0.97	0.96
Israel	1.00	0.99
SE	1.00	1.01
OC	0.99	1.01

Source: UNICEF data processed by Lynkeus

As regards the performance of pupils at higher grades, Table 14 shows a certain degree of correlation between overall level of socio-economic development and performance in scientific subjects.

Table 14. Average Mathematics and Science TIMSS Scale Scores of eighth-grade students. Group averages

Macro area	Average Mathematics TIMSS Scale Scores of eighth-grade students	Average Science TIMSS Scale Scores of eighth-grade students
SE	471.5	466.0
OC	465.7	466.5
SEC	435.7	447.7
NA	401.0	407.0
APPG	381.3	429.7

Source: Nces, processed by Lynkeus

5. Where do children enjoy better standards of living?

This question cannot be answered without reference to GDP per capita, which is still the best indicator available for all its inherent shortcomings. Even if GDP per capita were combined with indicators capable of capturing the distributive aspects of income (which proves particularly useful for the countries of the Arab Peninsula and the Gulf, as shown in table 15), the yardstick thus provided would still be non-unique and conceptually off-course with respect to the ultimate target of the child's economic well-being. It is therefore obviously necessary to focus attention on child poverty. We shall thus present the figures for GDP per capita and the UNICEF estimated percentages of poor children for the countries for which they are available.

Table 15. GDP per capita (\$). Weighted and arithmetic means (Weight structure: population). Year 2004

Macroarea	Weighted mean	Arithmetic mean
SE	25,377.4	21,650
APPG	7,839.1	14,112.5
OC	6,672.7	7,755.6
SEC	6,213.6	6,580.0
NA	4,635.1	5,420.0

Source: Lynkeus

Table 16. Percentage of children below the national poverty threshold

Country	Percentage of children below the national poverty threshold
Mexico	27.7
USA	21.9
Italy	16.8
New Zealand	16.3
Ireland	15.7
Portugal	15.6
UK	15.4
Canada	14.9
Spain	13.3
Poland	12.7
Greece	12.4
Austria	10.2
Germany	10.2
Netherlands	9.8
Luxembourg	9.1
Hungary	8.8
Belgium	7.7
France	7.5
Czech Republic	6.8
Switzerland	6.8
Sweden	4.2

Source: UNICEF 2005

The well-being of the Mediterranean child

The MedChild Foundation has devoted particular attention from the very outset to the question of measuring child well-being in the Mediterranean area. Though vital, the construction of suitable indexes is not an easy task, as discussed in the two research papers produced by Van der Gaag and Dunkelberg in 2004 and 2005. The second is presented in this edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child*, the first has been published in the MedChild Papers series under the title *A Child Well-Being Index and the Euro-Mediterranean Area*.

The 2004 paper examines the possibility of constructing child well-being indexes on the basis of the approach adopted by the UNDP for the Human Development Index (HDI), suitable modified to consider the specific features of the child's condition.

The dimensions considered are a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Four different indexes, namely the Child Welfare Index, Child Poverty Index, Child Gender-Related Development Index and Child Welfare Development Index, were thus

developed for children on the basis of more specific indicators than those used in the HDI and its extensions. The four indexes and the details of their calculation are summarised in the research paper published in this report together with a proposal for two new indexes focusing on adolescents and the family environment.

It should be stressed that while there is an abundance of data for the Mediterranean area, these are often non-homogeneous and not gathered systematically. Moreover, no systematic yearly publication exists at the level of international institutions (or private and public research agencies) to perform the task of describing the condition of children in the extended Mediterranean area in structured and systematic terms and through the calculation of indexes. The need for an agreed yardstick of child well-being going beyond such elementary indicators as the under-five mortality rate is indeed stressed in the 2005 UNICEF Report.

The problem is the need to take into consideration a whole range of aspects of the child's condition. First and foremost, a great effort is required for in-depth analysis of the condition of poverty. The failure of a measurement of average wealth like GDP per capita, which reveals nothing about the distributive aspects of wealth or aspects of well-being that are not strictly monetary in nature, is particularly evident in this case.

If it is true that a condition of absolute poverty (and therefore of misery) does exist, it is also true that what must be examined in order to understand the child's condition are the relative facets of poverty, an aspect described as social exclusion in studies on more developed countries. Another element to be borne in mind is the profile of the condition of children in the various phases of their growth and development.

It should be noted that the recent trend in the development of indicators of child well-being is toward representing and calculating also the positive dimensions of evolution, i.e. the improvements attained through policies and programmes undertaken by national and local authorities as well as private parties. In the light of these considerations and on the basis of the research effort undertaken by the MedChild Foundation, it is possible to identify two paths of future activity and investigation. The first regards the measurement and understanding of the conditions of poverty, both relative and absolute, in individual countries of the Mediterranean area with a view to developing more incisive well-being indexes of greater use to policy makers.

The second is the study and development of indices of well-being at the territorial level (cities, metropolitan areas and regions), which serve to represent the evolution of the area in question over time. The task in this case is

to create highly personalized indexes taking local programmes and available data as their starting point and seeking to develop knowledge of micro areas through new and specific field surveys and investigations. This could be extended to the representation of the indicators (both sectorial and overall) on detailed maps like those produced by Geographical Information Systems.

Indicators of societal outlook

This year's edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* includes a series of data regarding more general issues with respect to those focusing specifically on children. These are, however, of importance in seeking to pinpoint some of the factors indicative of the societal outlook within which the children of the Mediterranean grow up, develop personalities, and adopt the basic orientations underlying their future choices. The data in question are still "impressionistic", to be enriched little by little as fresh information of greater explanatory ability becomes available, and to be subjected to the critical appraisal of all the readers of the report.

It was decided to consider three different approaches in this connection with reference to certain basic "factors of context" that are usually regarded in principle as capable of acting as brakes on the development of a society characterized by real acceptance of large-scale entrepreneurship and innovation. The approach adopted by the World Bank in its report *Doing Business in 2005* focuses primarily on businesses and their interaction with the administrative, political and economic sphere in which they operate during their life cycle. It is precisely in relation to these moments of contact that the competitiveness of a system is defined and measured. The approach of the World Economic Forum is more concerned with the system as a whole and assesses its competitiveness in more general and abstract terms with reference to the conditions obtaining as regards macroeconomic stability, governance and technological development. The approach of the Heritage Foundation occupies an intermediate position, focusing on structured appraisal of economic freedom with reference to a series of elements that are more directly linked to the businessman's viewpoint, such as the tax burden, red tape, the informal market, etc., albeit without adopting a specific company focus.

The indicators in question are calculated with reference to a combination of objective data available to the public and subjective data obtained through ad hoc investigations carried out with the highest possible degree of standardization by experts at the national level. In operative terms with a view to developing an organic discourse, the indicators have been conceptually divided into three dimensions: a) starting a business; b) business obstacles; c) general conditions of competitiveness.

Starting a business: time and costs

Table 17 analyses some dimensions regarding the ease with which a business can be started. It shows that the major differences are not those concerning the number of procedures and the time required (and hence the bureaucratic aspect) but those concerning the cost of starting up and the minimum deposit required (and hence the aspect of the financial resources involved). As

regards the latter, the areas of the southeast coast of the Mediterranean and those of North Africa appear to be disadvantaged. As regards the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, it should be noted that the average values are adversely influenced by Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

The group is also characterized by a high degree of internal variability, as the estimates for Iran, Kuwait and Oman are much better.

Tab 17. Number of procedures, time and costs of starting a business: average values per macroarea

Macroarea	Number of procedures	Time (days)	Minimum capital deposit (% of income per capita)	Cost (% of income per capita)
APPG	11.17	49.67	629.70	63.33
SEC	8.50	40.75	1570.97	55.8
OC	10.22	42.11	52.90	18.92
NA	10.25	23.5	481.75	28.4
SE	9.25	41.75	38.45	17.25
Overall total	10.04	40.78	467.37	35.41

Source: World Bank data processed by Lynkeus

Starting a business: access to credit

Access to credit is another crucial factor at the beginning of a firm's life cycle. In Table 18, the Borrowers' and Lenders' Legal Rights Index, which measures the efficiency of the collateral and bankruptcy laws for the purposes of granting credit, is rather low (the range being from zero to ten),

This suggests the existence of legal obstacles to the efficiency of financing investments in the Mediterranean countries. In relative terms, however, the differences between the areas should not be attributed to variations in this index but to the cost of creating and registering collateral, which proves particularly high in North Africa and the SEC area. On the whole, tables 17 and 18 show that starting a business is more difficult in the NA and SEC areas, primarily because of the financial resources required by the legal system.

Table 18. Cost of creating collateral and Borrowers' and Lenders' Legal Rights Index: average values per macroarea

Macro area	Cost of creating collateral (% of income per capita)	Borrowers' and Lenders' Legal Rights Index
APPG	7.02	3.80
SEC	17.22	5.75
OC	8.08	5.11
NA	34.42	2.25
SE	11.27	3.00
Total	14.31	4.19

Source: World Bank data processed by Lynkeus

Constraints on business: the legal framework

One crucial element for a good business environment is the ability of the administrative system to provide efficient guarantees of respect for legality. Table 19 shows the average values of the International Corruption Perception Index developed by Transparency International. It refers to corruption in the public sector as perceived by academics, analysts and businessmen.

The values are rescaled so that, over a range from zero to ten, lower values indicate lower perceived levels of corruption. The areas of greatest perceived corruption prove to be the East Coast and North Africa followed by the SEC and APPG. The best results are achieved in Southern Europe.

Table 19. International Corruption Perception Index: average values per macroarea

Macroarea	Corruption Perception Index (CPI)	Rescaled Corruption Perception Index (RCPI)
APPG	4.53	5.47
SEC	4.20	5.80
OC	3.31	6.69
NA	3.24	6.76
SE	5.90	4.10
Total	4.16	5.84

Source: Transparency International data processed by Lynkeus

Another aspect regarding legality is respect for property rights. Table 20 examines the property rights component of the Heritage Foundation's index of economic freedom. Over a range from zero to five, the lower the index, the greater the guarantee of respect for property provided by the legal system. The results are in line with those of Table 19. The highest values, indicating less respect for property rights, are found on average in NA and OC, followed closely by the southeast coast of the Mediterranean and the APPG area. The situation is markedly better in Southern Europe.

Table 20. Property Rights Index: average values per macroarea

Macroarea	Property rights Index
APPG	3.00
SEC	2.60
OC	3.87
NA	3.80
SE	1.83
Overall total	3.06

Source: Heritage Foundation data processed by Lynkeus

Table 21 shows the number of procedures, the time involved, and the costs imposed by the legal system on the economy in the collection of overdue debt. In terms of time, the average for Southern Europe (446 days) is adversely influenced by Italy (1,390 days). If Italy were excluded, a standard of 132 days could be assumed for Southern Europe. It is, however, not so much time that differentiates the efficiency of legal systems as the cost of the operations involved in legally enforcing contracts.

In terms of this indicator, the worst situation results are again registered for North Africa, the southeast coast and the east coast.

Table 21. Number of procedures, time and costs involved in enforcing contracts legally: average values per macroarea

Macroarea	Number of procedures	Time (days)	Cost (% of debt)
APPG	41.67	454.00	13.63
SEC	39.25	580.00	22.97
OC	31.56	531.11	18.80
NA	33.75	271.00	19.20
SE	19.00	446.25	14.02
Overall total	33.41	470.11	17.62

Source: World Bank data processed by Lynkeus

Constraints on business: fiscal and bureaucratic ties

A country's inability to assert the rule of law efficiently is not, however, the only constraint on business development. Other impediments can derive from the tax system, bureaucratic machinery, the combined effects of these two factors (which can generate an informal economy obstructing the regular economy), and the dimension of economic freedom in general.

Table 22 shows that the weight of bureaucracy is particularly great in the countries of the East Coast, North Africa and the APPG area. The tax burden is highest in North Africa and Southern Europe. The combination of high taxation and bureaucratic regulation generates a sizeable informal market in North Africa. The informal market index is quite high also in the countries on the eastern shores, being determined in this case more by bureaucratic red tape than taxation

Table 22. Bureaucratic and fiscal constraints and the informal economy. Average values per macroarea

Group	Regulation index	Fiscal Burden index	Informal market index
APPG	3.37	2.44	2.87
SEC	2.80	2.80	2.90
OC	3.85	2.91	3.69
NA	3.60	4.12	3.60
SE	2.67	3.85	2.42
Overall total	3.31	3.14	3.11

Source: Heritage Foundation data processed by Lynkeus

Table 23. Overall competitiveness

Macro area	Growth competit. index	Macro economic enviro. index	Tech. index	Public instit. index
APPG	5.06	4.89	4.59	5.69
SEC	4.83	4.24	4.63	5.53
OC	3.78	3.49	3.82	4.06
NA	4.03	4.18	3.38	4.53
SE	4.68	4.47	4.54	5.28
Overall total	4.29	4.08	4.08	4.76

Due to lack of data, the values for the Arab Peninsula are based solely on the situations obtaining in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, both of which are at the highest levels found in Southern Europe. The figures for the southeast coast are simply the averages of those

obtained for Israel and Jordan, where the situations are obviously very different indeed, and thus cannot be regarded as indicative. An unusual situation is registered in North Africa, which lags behind the east coast in terms of technology but presents higher average levels as regards macroeconomic environment and public institutions. This is due to the negative impact of Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia.

Statistical clustering

For the purposes of statistical clustering, a number of indicators characterizing the living conditions for children were taken into consideration for each of the countries listed above. These indicators refer to a range of aspects that, while not exhausting the conceptual extension of the phenomenon, were regarded, at least initially, as sufficiently significant for the purposes of preliminary description.

The indicators employed also figure in two previous studies developed for the MedChild Foundation, namely *Measuring Child Well-Being in the Mediterranean Countries - Toward a Comprehensive Child Welfare Index*, by Jacques van der Gaag and Erika Dunkelberg, and *Towards an estimate of Child Welfare by the Rome-based Centro Europa Ricerche (CER)*. The approach adopted was that of Jacques van der Gaag, which focuses more narrowly on children and restricts the use of general indicators of development to the bare minimum. It was also necessary to exclude the indicators proving most incomplete with respect to coverage of the countries considered.

The indicators selected on this basis were used in an attempt to measure some key aspects of conditions for children. The complete list is given in table 24 with details of the source and year of reference for each.

The statistical study was carried out by Marco Serafini and can be consulted in technical detail in the Documents section of the MedChild site (www.medchild.org).

Table 24. Indicators selected

Indicator	Year of reference	Group of reference	Source
Infant Mortality Rate	2003	Long and healthy life	UNICEF, The State of World's Children - 2005
Under-five Mortality Rate	2003	Long and healthy life	UNICEF, The State of World's Children - 2005
Life expectancy at birth	2003	Long and healthy life	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Health Expenditure Per Capita	2001	Health	WHO, World Health Report 2004
Health Expenditure as percentage of GDP	2001	Health	WHO, World Health Report 2004
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education	1998-2002	Knowledge	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Net primary school enrolment/ attendance	1996-2003	Knowledge	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Percentage of primary school entrants reaching grade 5	1998-2001	Knowledge	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Gross Enrolment Ratio in Early Childhood Care and Education	2001/2002	Knowledge	Unesco, 2002
Gross Enrolment Ration in Secondary Education	1998-2002	Knowledge	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Adult Literacy Rate	2003	Knowledge	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005
Gross National Income Per Capita	2003	Decent standard of living	UNICEF, The State of World's Children 2005

The first step taken was principal component analysis. The first principal component is strongly characterized by the indicators associated with the possibility of a long and healthy life. In particular, it is positively correlated with the infant mortality rate (0.90) and the under-five mortality rate (0.89). The first principal component is also negatively correlated with life expectancy at birth (-0.95). This means that the lower the values obtained for the different countries with respect to this variable, the more favourable their conditions of mortality (high life expectancy and low rates of infant and under-five mortality). This could be described as the component of long and healthy life or of infant mortality in that it would serve to construct an index with a single variable reflecting life expectancy at birth, the infant mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate.

The second principal component is instead positively correlated with the rates of enrolment in primary education. In particular, it is correlated strongly with the gross enrolment rate in primary education (0.90) and quite strongly with the net enrolment rate (0.70). This means that the higher the values obtained for the different countries with respect to this variable, the higher their gross enrolment rates.

After the selection of these two variables, it was possible to divide the countries into statistical clusters in relation to the goals of ensuring a long and healthy life and full enrolment in primary education. The seven clusters thus formed are listed below.⁶⁶

In presenting a brief outline of the results, cluster 4 can be regarded as an intermediate cluster. It is in fact characterised by intermediate performance in terms of mortality rates and primary education in the sense that the countries belonging to the cluster tend to occupy central positions in the classifications. Cluster 4 is thus taken as a neutral term of reference in order to highlight particular situations. It comprises the countries of the SEC and the OC with the addition of Qatar, Tunisia and Libya.

Cluster 7 is characterised by the best mortality rates and the best situation as regards primary education. It comprises the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean with the addition of Malta and Cyprus, whose values with respect to the characteristics considered are statistically closer to the countries on the northern shore than the others.

(66) See the study by Marco Serafini for details of the method adopted (www.medchild.org).

Table 25. Results of the procedure of hierarchical aggregation⁶⁷

Clusters (final)	Countries
Cluster 1	1:Bahrain 23:Croatia 4:Kuwait 5:Oman 8:United Arab Emirates
Cluster 2	15:Algeria 16:Egypt 18:Morocco 2:Iran 28:Turkey
Cluster 3	3:Iraq
Cluster 4	11:Jordan 12:Lebanon 13:O. Palestine 14:Syria 17:Libya 19:Tunisia 20:Albania 21:Bosnia and Herzegovina 22:Bulgaria 24:Romania 25:Serbia and Montenegro 27:TFYR Macedonia 6:Qatar
Cluster 5	7:Saudi Arabia
Cluster 6	9: Yemen
Cluster 7	10:Israel 26:Slovenia 29:Cyprus 30:France 31:Greece 32:Italy 33:Malta 34:Spain

Cluster 1 is characterized with respect to the intermediate cluster 4 by more favourable mortality rates (albeit not reaching the levels of cluster 7) and lower levels of primary education. Cluster 1 includes the countries of the Arab Peninsula with the addition of Croatia and the exclusion of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The inclusion of

(67) As regards mortality rates, there is a slight overlap between clusters 1 and 4. The rates for Oman and Bahrain, which present the least favourable values in cluster 1, are analogous to those of Serbia and Macedonia, the countries presenting the most favourable values in cluster 4. Oman and Bahrain are, however, included in cluster 1 due to their low levels of primary education.

Croatia, a country on the borderline between cluster 7 and cluster 1, is grounded on its greater statistical proximity to cluster 1. The exclusion of Qatar is instead due to its greater statistical proximity to cluster 4.

Saudi Arabia is also excluded from cluster 1 and placed on its own in cluster 5. Saudi Arabia presents mortality rates that are worse than cluster 1 and in line with least favourable levels found in cluster 4 together with a critical situation in primary education (even worse than cluster 1).

Cluster 2 is characterized with respect to the intermediate cluster 4 by markedly worse mortality rates and tendentially worse performance in terms of primary education. Cluster 2 comprises the countries of North Africa with the exclusion of Tunisia and Libya and the addition of Iran. The exclusion of Tunisia and Libya from cluster 2 is due to the fact that these two countries present conditions of mortality and primary education more in line with those of the intermediate cluster 4. The inclusion of Iran in this group is due to its poor mortality rates rather than its performance as regards primary education, which is good.

Iraq (cluster 3) and Yemen (cluster 6) are both characterized by the worst rates of mortality and low levels in primary education. They are, however, placed in two separate clusters because Iraq presents a better net rate of education and above all because its gross rate of primary education is relatively inconsistent with its net rate.

In short, the preliminary factorial analysis selected two primary target dimensions offering the best possibility of statistically differentiating and summarising the performance of the countries concerned with respect to the goals of ensuring a long and healthy life and primary education for all. In relation to both goals, the cluster analysis indicates that the best performances are achieved by the countries on the northern shore of the Mediterranean and pinpoints a group of countries (roughly comprising those of the east and southeast coasts) occupying an intermediate position.

At the same time, it also highlights other situations of more or less markedly substandard performance. In particular, a critical situation as regards mortality is found in Iraq and in Yemen, which also registers very poor performance in terms of primary education.

Iran, Turkey and the countries of North Africa also present major but less critical shortcomings as regards both mortality rates and primary education (with the exception of Iran). Finally, the Arab countries present a peculiar combination of good results in terms of mortality rates and low levels of primary education.

Tools for developing a MedChild network community

The 2005 edition of *Charting the Mediterranean Child* seeks to provide a working tool for all public and private agencies interested in the issues regarding children in the area.

This annual report is in fact one of the linchpins of the action undertaken by the MedChild Foundation to build up a network community with a growing number of scholars and research centres ready to work together to develop an ever-deeper understanding of the problems and prospects of children and adolescents across the Mediterranean.

Another mainstay of the Foundation's activities has recently been launched with largely analogous objectives and primarily targeting NGO communities involved in the area. We refer to the MedChild Best Practices Award, to be presented for the first time in Dubai during the conference *Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region: Addressing Priorities in Education – 16-18 May 2005*.

The Award is grounded on the principle that recognition of and respect for the rights of the human being with no distinction whatsoever must constitute an essential criterion also for the assessment of policies aimed at children, and that respect for children's rights and greater equality between children and adults will help preserve the pact between generations and contribute toward democracy. Its primary goal is to foster the development of a comprehensive, consistent and coordinated policy for children in the enlarged Mediterranean area.

Divided into the four sections of early child development, education & culture, health, and urban settings, the Award has proved most successful, with nearly 100 practices aimed at children in the Mediterranean area submitted by the final deadline. Over 80 of these were then judged eligible to compete for the awards⁶⁸.

It is in line with these aims and with a view to fostering a broader exchange of ideas on issues regarding the prospects for children in the Mediterranean region that *Charting the Mediterranean Child 2005* is now submitted to the critical appraisal of its readers.

(68) MedChild, *First MedChild Award for Best Practices: Report on the main results and selected list of the submitted Best Practices, Dubai, 17 May 2005*, MedChild Paper No. 2.