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## **OWNERSHIP AND CONDITIONALITY**

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## OWNERSHIP AND CONDITIONALITY

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Conditionally, ownership or empowerment, and partnership are terms and concepts that have long been used in the context of North-South relations, both in connection with co-operation and development aid and with trade, economic relations and even, although to a lesser extent, external relations. They are not always understood in the same sense; the notion of partnership has different meanings when applied to relations between groups of nations (e.g. in the case of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership) and when it is used to describe the links between unequal partners, particularly in connection with development aid and, in general, the processes aimed, in the context of North-South relations, at improving the relative position of southern countries in the international environment.

Therefore, in order to assess the pros and cons of applying the concept to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, we must first analyse the notion, along with other concepts with which it shares meaning (such as conditionality). We will start, then, with conditionality and then move on to examine ownership at the theoretical and practical level (in the case of Africa). The subsequent sections (from Section IV on) will deal with the case of Europe.

### **I CONDITIONALITY, OWNERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP: INTERLOCKING CONCEPTS?**

The term “ownership”, along with its various connotations and denotations, has become a common one since 1996, when the OECD’s Development Aid Committee (DAC) adopted the text entitled *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Development Partnership Strategy*, which, among other aspects, stressed the importance of “developing country ownership”. A few years later, in 1998 and 1999, the DAC itself pointed out in its yearly report that there was “a concerted move in the donor community to re-think donor-driven development co-operation modalities” and a need for southern countries to assume a leadership role. In addition, we must also take into account the numerous reports published in the second half of the 1990s on the failure of conditionality (e.g. the World Bank’s well-known *Assessing Aid*), within the framework of works on the effectiveness and efficiency of aid and changes in the Bretton Woods financial institutions in respect of strategies for combating poverty and, in particular, the close link established between good practices and good governance and development aid. In addition, the change in strategy after July 1998 (Group of 7, Cologne) in the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Country) initiative led to criticism of conditionality, linking it to ownership. This gives us the broad outlook and the contextual conclusion: ownership,

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conditionality and partnership are partly overlapping and interdependent concepts, although ownership has recently moved somewhat to the fore.

The subject has also taken on greater importance recently in the European Union, although somewhat later than in other contexts, at least within the framework of external relations and not just in connection with development aid. It would now even seem more reasonable to speak of ownership than of conditionality, all within a framework of partnership.

However, conditionality, which has existed for as long as there has been aid, has not only not disappeared, but could in a sense said to be more pervasive than ever. We will start off, then, with a brief look at the subject of conditionality, and then move on to ownership. The idea is a simple one: in order to determine whether ownership is the positive side of conditionality, or how the two concepts are related, we must first examine the basic assumptions in respect of conditionality, a concept and practice with a very long history.

## **1. Conditionality - A Brief Review**

We will now look, in three sections, at the basic aspects of conditionality, understood as an ongoing practice in unequal North-South relations, since the Euro-Mediterranean relationship, although it is a partnership agreement, falls into this category.

### **A. Aid and unequal external relations are never unconditional**

Conditionality is inherent to the notion of aid, in a conceptual sense: whether we are speaking of projects, programmes, budget support or debt relief, there is always the initial conviction and expectation, either explicit or implicit, that they will lead to a certain type of conduct on the part of the recipient. In other words, the concession itself is always linked to certain conditions and expectations, even in the absence of any penalties or rewards. The first major aid programme, the Marshall Plan, included explicit conditions for the recipients, including joint management by an ad hoc organisation. Consequently, regardless of how it is provided, aid is always linked to conditionality.

Some authors have claimed on the basis of this fact that, since conditionality is a type of interference, all aid and unequal external relations are misconceived. On the other hand, however, as the basis for this workshop we will start from the supposition that the problem is not conditionality in itself, which is inevitable, but rather the destination of the aid or the instrument used in an unequal relationship and its results and the type of conditionality. In other words, we start with the premise that programmes to combat poverty and promote good governance can be supported with external aid and financial partnership instruments, but with one requisite: **the forms of conditionality must be made consistent and compatible with the ownership of programmes and objectives.** Consequently, we will now look at the different types of conditionality.

### **B. Which conditionality? Types and modalities**

According to Stokke, conditionality supposes “the use of pressure, by the donor, in terms of threatening to terminate aid, or actually terminating or reducing it, if conditions

are not met by the recipient”. In other words, conditionality is characterised by the use of external aid as an instrument to promote a set of objectives that the recipient, at least in theory, has no choice but to accept. Under these circumstances, the conditions can be imposed in two ways, i.e. *ex ante*, where the objectives are a prior condition for the establishment of the aid relationship, or *ex post*, where compliance with the donor’s expectations is performed during the process of receipt of the aid, assistance or co-operation instrument.

This is not the time to examine the history of conditionality in detail, but we can point up three generations (now existing in part and therefore overlapping):

- a. The first generation, in which conditions were centred on the basic attainment of orthodox economic objectives.
- b. The second generation, in which conditionality generally pursued changes to systems and processes, centring on political objectives (democratisation, good governance, participation, good practices, anti-corruption measures), economic and trade priorities (investment) and environmental goals (sustainability), or on individuals and values (equality of the sexes, gender equity, promotion and respect for human rights), etc.
- c. The third generation, arising only recently, stresses the conditions common to the second generation, but also attempts to eliminate the negative aspects of conditionality by compensating with the importance of ownership. In other words, this is the generation that is attempting to complement conditionality with ownership: the motto is “we are imposing conditions so that you will take over the process and make it your own from the outset”.

The outcome is that conditionality now is or has been applied at least to the following areas of external aid, development aid and relations of partnership or linking between northern and southern countries:

1. Efficient economic management.
2. Development of private enterprise and, in general, market-friendly conditions.
3. Reduction of spending on arms and fostering of measures of confidence, alternative defence, and other measures aimed at reducing the risk of violent solutions to conflict and crisis.
4. Reduction of poverty and focus on the poorest segments of society.
5. Strengthening of women’s position and promotion of equality.
6. Human development.
7. Environmental protection and sustainable development.
8. Observance and protection of human rights and fostering of the rule of law.

9. Good governance and good practice.

10. Democratisation and consolidation of democracy.

### **C. Generations and types of conditionality: the link in terms of ownership**

If we then combine the view of generations and the view of issues to which conditionality has been applied, up to the present phase of blending of conditionality and ownership, we can draw the following conclusions, in a succinct and direct analysis:

**One** - In spite of having been the key factor for a number of decades, economic conditionality is losing ground, or is at least undergoing drastic transformation (less emphasis on structural adjustment). This is due equally to the emphasis placed on the arguments in favour of opening up (globalisation as opportunity, as a discourse element), to the perception of the inadequacy stemming from the lack of complete reciprocity in conventional economic conditionality, and, last but not least, to the acceptance that it had reduced the State to an excessively minimalist role. Consequently, in the field of development aid and, in general, North-South relations, there is increasing attention paid, both in the North and the South, to the need for ownership and for linking economic factors to administrative and economic reform, to issues such as corruption, transparency, creation of “market-friendly” institutions, etc. In other words, the first two generations have blended and the third generation is beginning to emerge as a synthesis of the two.

**Two** - Political conditionality, which has been present, although dissembled, from the start in development aid (for example, during the tensest phases of the Cold War), continues to exist, but with a somewhat scrambled rationale, mixing economic reform, promotion of democracy and, in recent years, democratisation, good governance and human rights. There is one highly visible problem: in the 1990s the political conditionality imposed by the North has become increasingly proactive and prescriptive, in spite of the growing emphasis placed on participation and partnership, although they are not altogether incompatible. Therefore, the third generation, the combination of conditionality with ownership, is faced with a very difficult challenge in the case of recent political conditionality: governance, human rights and even military conditionality (a important factor in the charter for development aid by Japan, approved in 1994, in the WMF since 1991, and in Germany [with the requirement of cutbacks in military spending by India and then Pakistan], Switzerland and Norway). Perhaps a clearer example of the problem, and one more directly applicable to the Mediterranean, is the fact that it is difficult to preach reciprocity or two-way streets, one of the fundamentals of ownership, in the case of military conditionality, since it would mean a cutback in arms sales by the North.

**Three** - The other types of conditionality that exist and are applied (commercial, environmental, policies for combating poverty) have been and remain less important, at least in terms of their lower impact in quantitative and qualitative terms. There are other means of attaining the desired results. We will only mention, then, three basic considerations. In respect of commercial conditionality, it is sufficient to bear in mind,

however, that it exists, either explicitly or implicitly, and particularly in connection with financial aid and, above all, technical co-operation. As for environmental conditionality, the fact that it is a recent addition means that accurate appraisal remains to be made, but it seems clear that, so far, it has been more beneficial to donors than to recipients. The issue of conditionality linked to measures to combat poverty would require more extensive examination, within the framework of PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) and Sectorial Investment Programmes (sometimes known as Swaps or SDPs).

**Four** - The effectiveness of conditionality, from the standpoint of the North, or donors, has shown itself to be:

- Limited in its capacity to influence the recipient.
- Inefficient, owing to infrequent use (more rhetoric, less political willingness for actual application), or use without coherent standards, of negative and positive sanctions (penalties and rewards).
- Inconsistent, if we compare the different countries and sectors where it has been applied. Ultimately, internal or domestic reasons are of greater weight in explaining the actual application or non-application of conditionality than are external factors or the actual need to promote specific reforms or changes in the recipient country.

In short, even in the North's discourse, conditionality has been shown to be not very credible (few tangible results) and also increasingly contested and unpopular. It is, of course, still applied, but at the same time alternative approaches are being sought.

## 2. Alternatives to conditionality: from the selective option to ownership

Under these circumstances, although conditionality remains a factor, other approaches have been sought, including, briefly, the following:

a. **The selective option:** Donor countries study the potential recipients and the policies implemented by them and decide to allocate funds (or strengthen ties, search for partners, etc.) to countries with good policies that pursue appropriate ends, without conditionality coming formally into play. In other words, the donors' objectives and preferences are publicised, the offer available on the recipients "market" is analysed and the recipients are selected, with no explicit conditionality (either negative or after the fact) being applied, leaving room for ownership. Nevertheless, this approach involves several problems. The first is that, in spite of this difference, it still presupposes adjustments and change by the recipient, although, as we mentioned earlier, conditionality is a factor in all aid. The second is more difficult to overcome: a clear, non-arbitrary definition of "good policies", appropriate objectives and good practices is required. We might even mention a third problem, supposing that satisfactory results are achieved: the "best learners" cease to have priority. For example, Morocco has been struck from the list of priority countries for the European initiative for promotion of human rights.

b. **The search for informal channels for influence:** Rather than imposing direct conditions, ways are sought to bring influence to bear through semi-structured, largely

informal processes (outside State circuits), such as strong promotion of civil society and spheres of agreement between market, civil and State and government forces.

c. **Ownership:** Given that the official discourse advocates partnership (the standard phrase everywhere is “Partnership is no longer just an option. It is a necessity.”) and participation, following the normal discourse of NGOs in the 1980s, the idea of ownership has come to the fore (DAC, *Development Co-operation Report 1998. From Donorship to Ownership*).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these three approaches are not mutually exclusive, and there are already examples of this, as we will see now in the case of Africa.

### **3. Example: The Special Initiative of UN Systems-wide in Africa, promoted by the UNDP (1996–2002)**

An initiative was launched in 1996 to rationalise aid to Africa from the United Nations system (including the Bretton Woods institutions), with the threefold objective of “co-ordinating effectively, acting synergistically, seizing opportunities for genuine partnership, building capacity at every level,” in short, to make the phrase of the United Charter that reads “uniting our strengths” a reality. This initiative, which was relaunched in 2000, has focussed on multilateral organisations and particularly on the areas of governance, education, health and information technology, seeking consistency between programmes in exchange for the promise of further resources, but has also attained significant results in the co-ordination of actions on the part of bilateral donors (for example, with primary education in Senegal and Mozambique and, at a more basic level, in Zimbabwe). A particularly productive side has been the collaboration between UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank, along with France, in helping to overcome “policy impediments” in Senegal and thereby achieve a more abundant flow of resources through the investment programmes sector.

In short, this exercise, based on the diagnosis of the weaknesses that have come to light so far in co-operation for development, was centred (in accordance with James Gustave Speeth, UNDP Administrative and Special Initiative Co-chairperson) on the following:

1. Best practices and approaches to problem-solving.
2. Reliable and timely information, aiming for a common communication strategy between donors and recipients.
3. Effective political mobilisation.
4. Donor support and donor co-ordination, including civil society and NGOs.
5. Internalisation within the UN system.
6. African ownership.

After two years, and focussing on the governance programme, the one closest to the three areas of the Barcelona process, we can formulate a number of suggestions and lessons learned of value to Euromesco.

In other words - confirmed guidelines for ensuring ownership:

a. The importance of building country-driven strategies. In other words, co-ordination by donors is of great importance and a necessary pre-condition, but not sufficient in itself: aid must be provided in support of programmes and strategies designed by the users themselves, meaning that links between them must be fostered. At the outset of the initiative, African ownership was not so clear-cut, but the complicity of the political leaders was sought (in June 1997, on the occasion of the summit of African leaders, “the heads of state reaffirmed their ownership of the Special Initiative and undertook to ensure its fullest implementation”). In other words, the prime objective of the Initiative was to help Africa to help itself; we might also say that, in order to foster ownership, aid must be demand-driven and not donor-imposed.

b. Conditionality is reduced to a secondary position and is, ultimately, a shared objective. Recipients conceive programmes and strategies themselves, but only after having agreed on the framework (combating poverty in the priority sector, enhancing human rights, etc.)

c. The need for support by civil society and non-governmental organisations. The Initiative has met with some success because it has moved towards ownership not only by the African national authorities, but also by civil society organisations. This is good all round and a prerequisite for greater chances of success, but it is absolutely necessary in the case of programmes linked to good governance.

In other words, at the level of governance, ownership pursues at least the following ends:

1. National leadership.
2. Broad participation leading to national consensus or at least national legitimation of the programme, which can be achieved through the creation of bodies such as the African Governance Forum.
3. Construction of partnerships aimed at financing national governance programmes.

To sum up, the experience gained through the African Initiative allows us to state that, at least in good governance programmes (affecting the dimension of security), there is no place for conditionality in the conventional sense, but instead a need for ownership. Good governance is not and cannot be a synonym for conditionality. I am not in agreement here; good governance theories and practices are not applied in these countries and if they agree to move towards good governance, that in itself is conditionality, how they go about it is up to them; there is ownership, but it is based upon conditionality imposed from outside. This is not only for reasons of morality or political correctness, but rather strictly for the purpose of attaining objectives:



sustainable programmes for good practices and good governance cannot be imposed from outside. Furthermore, given the importance of stability and good governance for entry into the international market, it seems obvious, as Speeth would have it, that “the best way to attract external partners, both public and private, and to ensure the positive and durable impact of the countries’ own development efforts” is the combination of ownership and good governance (in this connection, see African Recovery, United Nations). This is the view from the South.

## **II. OWNERSHIP AND DERIVATIVE CONCEPTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

External relations between the EU and southern countries, and in particular the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, have for some time dealt with issues related to conditionality and, more recently, ownership. Conditionality is an old phenomenon, and the case of the European Union is no exception, but it has recently taken on new facets, especially in the context of development co-operation and aid, some of them closely linked to ownership.

Specifically, relations between the EU and the ACP countries have been governed by the Lomé Convention, based originally on the idea of equal partnership between the two groups of countries. Nevertheless, the original framework has changed, owing to two phenomena: a) the evolution of the EU towards a more political union, making it necessary to “politicise” dialogue with the ACP countries; and b) the end of the Cold War and the impact of the globalisation process, which has completely transformed the economic, political and geostrategical position of the ACP countries and undermined the importance of previous alliances, with a more extensive historical, ideological and neo-colonial basis.

In this context, conditionality has always been present in relations between the ACP countries and the EU, although the formula has changed in recent years, due to the reduction of financial resources for development aid, the importance of accountability and the pursuit of real efficiency, on the one hand, and the link in the international context between the emphasis on human rights and good governance and the provision of development aid.

In these circumstances, conditionality has become one of the leading principles of co-operation for development and the EU’s external relations. On the other hand, while conditionality is maintained (i.e. the unequal relation between the donor, who sets conditions, and the recipient), positive measures are stressed, rather than penalties in the case of violations. In other words, conditionality and ownership also go hand in hand in the case of the EU. This has two consequences:

- a. a dynamic presence of factors in tension in the relationship (paternalism vs. partnership, dialogue vs. leverage, needs vs. merits)
- b. increasing importance of participation and empowerment. In other words, of negotiation of conditionality, transparency, and shared decision-making, at least in part.

This is all reflected both in the legal framework and the practices of the EU: the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, evolution of the CFSP, the directives and other texts of the Commission and the Council on different aspects relating to development co-operation, political dialogue, human rights and prevention of violent conduct in conflicts, and, of course, changes in the EU-ACP relationship.

## **1. Co-operation with the ACP countries**

The concept of ownership has been applied preferentially in the area of relations with the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. In their external relations, the African countries have maintained a discourse linked closely to notions of Africanness, non-interference, etc., concepts that have arisen through a long tradition forged in reflection on the phenomenon of colonialism and the plundering of the continent's resources. In short, external relations must take into account above all the motto "African solutions for African problems". At the same time, the economic development of the continent, and of all the ACP countries, is linked to external factors: debt, foreign trade and, above all, aid granted by IFIs and IGOs and bilateral aid from States are essential to the development of these countries. These considerations were of particular importance in the context of the gestation of the new agreement and framework for ACP-EU relations, the Cotonou Agreement.

For our purposes, the fact is that the principle of ownership has been consolidated as a fundamental principle of the Cotonou Accord. Article 2 of the Accord states that "ACP-EU co-operation shall be exercised on the basis of the fundamental principle of equality of the partners and ownership of the development strategies." This is expressed in the text of the Accord in the consideration of two complementary areas.

**One** - Responsibility and sovereignty of the ACP States when deciding which strategies are the best for the development of their economies and societies. The text states that "the ACP States shall determine the development strategies for their economies and societies in all sovereignty". In other words, the principle of ownership is taken as the corollary of the principle of sovereign equality of the States, although with nuances, since the principle of ownership is set out alongside the principle of equality of the partners. The idea is to stress that the main responsibility lies with the ACP countries themselves. Further on, the Accord elaborates on the principle in Article 57 (although without explicit mention), when it lists the responsibilities of the ACP countries in a number of areas, in which it is expressly stated that they have decision-making power.

**Two** - This extends to the area of political relations and development strategies, On the one hand, "partnership shall encourage ownership of the development strategies by the countries and populations concerned". Since this principle is to be applied by the ACP countries, it would appear that the reference here is above all to the fact that the Community and its member states must actively promote this assumption of responsibility. In other words, the EU (and, more generally, the partnership as a whole) must centre its actions on supporting the decisions made by these countries. Article 56, which deals with the principles of the Accord, elaborates on this when it states that "Development finance co-operation shall be implemented on the basis of and be

consistent with the objectives, strategies and priorities for development established by the ACP States, at both the national and regional levels.”

In addition, the Accord links ownership and conditionality. Article 2 of the Cotonou Accord states that the aforementioned basic principles (equality and ownership) must take into account the essential factors set out in Article 9 of the Accord, which refers to the mechanism of conditionality governing the Accord and, above all, places the decisions made by the ACP countries within the framework of a set of general principles and obligations that direct the relations and the Accord. In other words, although the ACP countries can choose their own strategies, those strategies are subject at all times to the essential and fundamental elements of the Accord. Put more explicitly, conditionality and ownership are compatible and can be two sides of the same coin.

This is not the time to go more deeply into the question, but in the context of this workshop and of the possible application of the idea of ownership to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, what we aim to do is to consider the limits or restrictions on ownership. In other words, a reduction of the extent of interference, but without eliminating it entirely.

## **2. Security**

Is the idea of ownership applicable to the area of security? Can it also be said in this context that conditionality and ownership are related, interlocking concepts, ones that are partly consistent and partly contradictory? This subject can only be dealt with properly at great length, so we will limit ourselves here to the area of prevention of conflicts, both during the phase of build-up to the crisis and post-conflict building.

It is worthwhile to take into account at least the following considerations:

1. The Commission’s communiqué of April 2001 on the prevention of conflicts, specifically the section “Support for Democracy, the Rule of Law and Civil Society”, and particularly the case of Indonesia, with assumption of ownership of the reform process.
2. The 1997 speech by the European Commissioner for Development and ACP Countries, João de Deus Pinheiro, who included ownership as one of the six principles for preventing conflicts in Africa. In doing so, he stated “Ultimately, it will be up to the Africans themselves to decide to what extent they are determined to engage in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and to what extent they are determined to build the institutions and policy-making structures that make a viable state.” Above all, he referred to the importance of the EU not providing only ready-made solutions and of Europe doing no more than creating an environment in which ownership is possible. In practical terms, Pinheiro links this to assertiveness and above all to capacity-building: “Assistance for effective ownership means capacity-building.”
3. The numerous texts dealing with the emergency-rehabilitation-development continuum, linking prevention to development. Thus, Article 73, paragraph 1 of the Cotonou Accord, in reference to post-emergency action aimed at physical and social rehabilitation, states that action must be taken under this Accord and with the

Community's assistance to "[...] ease the transition from the emergency phase to the development phase [...] and strengthen institutions and the ownership by local and national actors of their role in formulating a sustainable development policy for the ACP country concerned".

4. Also in connection with relations with the ACP countries, Article 11 of the Cotonou Accord, on "Peace-building policies, conflict prevention and resolution", states in respect of those policies that "[...] This policy shall be based on the principle of ownership. It shall in particular focus on building regional, sub-regional and national capacities, and on preventing violent conflicts at an early stage by addressing their root causes in a targeted manner [...]."

All of the above leads to the conclusion that the notion of ownership appears to be sufficiently broad and rich in significant nuances to have become a driving idea and a guiding principle, one that will therefore crop up with increasing frequency in contexts relating to security.

### **III. OWNERSHIP AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERSHIP (EMP)**

While the concept of ownership appears to have consolidated its presence in North-South relations and specifically in EU-ACP relations, this does not seem to be the case in the Mediterranean area. Any explanation of the different conceptual treatment of the two regions must take into account the differing reasonings, needs and objectives of the third-party countries concerned and also the different nature of the EU's relations with the two regions.

The concept of ownership does not appear in the main documents of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, the successive conclusions of the Euro-Mediterranean Conferences up to Valencia, and the common strategy for the Mediterranean Region of June 2000 make no use of the concept.

On the other hand, the term appears in a European Commission staff working document of January 2001 on external aid, in which, in reference to the Barcelona Process and after having stated that the Partnership must focus on ambitious but viable objectives, it calls for study of "how to increase the sense of 'ownership' of the Partnership among our Mediterranean partners".

The Presidency Conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers of External Affairs, held in Valencia on 22–23 April 2002, contains a similar reference. The third paragraph states "[...] A tangible reinforcement of the sense of ownership of the Process by all partners was underlined and concrete initiatives to this end were agreed." The Plan of Action approved at Valencia goes no farther than mentioning in its Introduction the agreement between the parties to strengthen the sense of ownership among the parties.

Unlike the Cotonou Accord, these documents, in listing the initiatives, do not explicitly mention the responsibilities of the EMP countries that imply a certain amount of

leeway, but rather continue referring in the same conventional manner to political dialogue, need for investment, harmonisation of laws, etc. We believe that this is further confirmation of the different meanings of the concept in the two processes.

Additionally, these same Presidency Conclusions mention co-ownership visibility, which would appear to refer to the need for all the countries involved (both the EU and its member states and the EMP countries) to take the process over as their own rather than to any assumption of responsibilities. Here, co-ownership would shift more towards the meaning of “partnership”. Paragraph 3 of the Common Strategy states that Mediterranean policy is to be guided by the principle of partnership, “a partnership which should be actively supported by both sides”.

The different terminology used in the accords with the ACP and EMP countries points up certain differences in respect of how the two processes are conceived.

In both cases, we can identify a common terminology that transmits a twofold idea:

1. Need to agree policies by consensus (political and economic dialogue, joint institutions, work together, common ground, etc.)
2. Recognition of the EU’s higher level of development, placing it in a position from which it must help the ACP and EMP countries (encouraging and supporting the efforts of, assist, etc.). It is more a question of identifying common problems, exchanging information, consultation and dialogue than of responsibility on the part of the EMP countries.

Nevertheless, in the case of the Cotonou Accord, in addition to the concept of ownership, other terms proper to the Accord point to the different political traditions (equality of partners, etc.) and especially the different objectives of the two processes. In the case of the Cotonou Accord, the central element is the eradication of poverty, fostering of sustainable development and gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy, and it is precisely in connection with strategies for development that the Accord provides above all for the need for ownership.

In the case of the EMP, we can generally state that the central element is economic (in spite of claims as to the multidimensional nature of the EMP. It could also be argued that for the EU, the EMP is primarily a “source of business”, leaving the relation in terms of development aid in the background. We might then ask whether the concept of ownership can be applied to economic and financial aspects. While the Cotonou Accord provides a list of the countries’ responsibilities, leaving, in theory, a certain amount of leeway, in the case of the EMP what are defined instead are the obligations of the EMP countries.

This is the result of two circumstances: a) The situation of inequality and dependency that characterises relations between the EU and the EMP countries, giving rise to the fact that the terms of the partnership were, to a great extent, imposed by the North, which would explain, in part, why key issues for the South (agriculture, foreign debt, movement of populations) are absent or relegated to the background; and b) leeway in respect of economic issues is minimal for these States - the means of economic

transition for the EMP countries through the reform of their economic policies and institutions are dictated from outside, not only by the EU, but also by the IFIs and by the macroeconomic constraints of the international economic and financial system.

In short, not only is the decision-making process an unequal one if we compare the ACP-EU relation and the EMP, but the issues in question are also different.

#### **IV. QUESTIONS IN CONCLUSION: IS THE CONCEPT OF OWNERSHIP OF ANY USE IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN AREA?**

We can conclude, in general terms, that the idea of “assuming responsibility”, of taking over the process, ought to be incorporated into the process. Nevertheless, whether or not it is viable is another question altogether.

In order to find ways of accomplishing this, we must, focusing on ownership, bear in mind three factors.

Firstly, that it must be placed in the framework of the debate on the importance of the North and the South sitting down to negotiate at the same tables, creating mutual or shared interests and thereby making the partnership a legitimate one: all players in the global game are able to negotiate, in spite of existing inequalities.

Secondly, ownership requires the ability to make decisions. If in fact these countries have no choice but to accept what is actually a prescription imposed from outside, whatever name it is called by, is there any possibility of real ownership?

And lastly, ownership runs up against the problem of the actual capacity of states, governments and, in general, the institutions of all players (both governmental and non-governmental) in the South: in many cases their actual capacity does not go much beyond mere acceptance of a framework that they have somehow helped to design and legitimised in a process with the participation of donors and recipients. In other words, at best they can take ownership of almost the only thing on the menu, not because it is imposed from outside, but merely because there is nothing else available to be put on their menu.

Therefore, we can advocate and work for ownership, but we must be very aware of the starting conditions. To put it in a perhaps provocative manner, ownership is not for those to whom it is allowed, or for those who pursue it, but for those who, being allowed it and pursuing it, can assume it. In other words, the less developed and poorest countries are unlikely candidates for ownership, and this remains a constraint upon the southern rim of the Mediterranean basin.