

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the European Parliament must lead the way in promoting democracy and economic and financial integration between the EU and the Mediterranean.

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Encompassing the 27 EU member states, and 16 partner countries, the Union for the Mediterranean aims to promote stability and prosperity throughout the region. The Chairman of the EPP Group of the European Parliament, [Joseph Daul](#), writes that in the wake of the Arab Spring, the European Parliament must lead the way in encouraging democracy and partnership between the EU and the Mediterranean.



Bringing down barriers: we are all the same

Last February I was walking along the streets of Tunis, looking at people and thinking that we are all the same: no matter whether we come from Tunisia, France or any other corner of the globe. All over the world, people want to live in a democracy, to be able to take the destiny of their country in their own hands and ensure a stable future for their children.

In the European Union, we take liberty as a natural right, as a given. For others, often not far from us, it has been taken away. As we did 22 years ago in Europe, we now need to bring down the walls that still separate us from our southern neighbours. Ordinary citizens have made extraordinary efforts to take a first decisive step on the long road to true democracy. I applaud their courage and determination.

Tunisia as a model for new democracies

Following all the official and less formal meetings that I had in Tunis, I have come to the conclusion that Tunisia could serve as a model of stability and democracy for those countries central to the Arab spring movement. After the formidable popular and peaceful revolution of 2011 that gave the Tunisian people renewed hope, the time has come to build a tranquil and pluralist democracy. I am hoping that the new Constitution and a new legal framework will be those of a full democracy.

The heart of a democracy is its people; its voice must be its Parliament

In the [EPP Group](#) we strongly support the aspirations of people fighting for democracy, fundamental human rights and social justice. That is why we want coherent policies focused on people and values in the Mediterranean region. The EU must be pro-active, effective and results-oriented. Specifically, we're calling for a Charter of Values, a solid economic partnership, action in support of the young, a rapid reaction to the situation in Syria and great infrastructure projects at sea.

But we cannot do it alone. We have to

engage our partners around the Mediterranean. The changes brought about by the people in Mediterranean countries must have the strong support of parliamentarians from the entire region. We want the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean to become a driving force in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, so as to create a true partnership of the people, by the people and for the people.

We, as parliamentarians, know the fundamental role of a Parliament in a democracy. A representative and empowered Parliament should represent its citizens' interests. It is our obligation to ensure that all governments serve the people. Democracy is not only about how the majority rules, but also about how minorities are protected. The heart of a democracy is its people; its voice must be its Parliament. When Parliaments are not functioning, the people take to the streets to have their demands heard. We, parliamentarians, have to lead the way towards a renewed Euro-Mediterranean partnership.



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A community of values for stability and solidarity

We all know that there are different kinds of democratic models. Each country has to look for its own path and at its own pace. Yet, we all share common values: respect for the individual and respect for diversity, individual freedom and national solidarity. There is no real stability without a true community of values.

The Union of the Mediterranean has to make real progress that would allow for more economic and financial integration, creating empowering job opportunities, especially for unemployed youth. Important projects are still only on paper; they have to be implemented.

We know in Europe that only concrete achievements can create solidarity between peoples. I hope together we will have the boldness to share the same vision of a democratic and generous Mediterranean so that we can keep our people in peace and prosperity.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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Joseph Daul – Chairman of the EPP Group of the European Parliament

Joseph Daul was elected to the European Parliament in 1999. Since 2002 he has been the Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, and under his chairmanship, the committee contributed significantly to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 2003. He is also chairman of the European Parliamentary Association which has its seat in Strasbourg and which aims to help give parliamentary life a more convivial dimension, allowing Members of the European Parliament also to establish contacts in academic, economic and cultural circles.



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