

Stiftung Wissensraum Europa – Mittelmeer (WEM) e.V.

Kulturwissenschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Kulturaustausch
im euro-mediterranen Raum

Fondation Espace du savoir Europe – Méditerranée (WEM)

Coopération en sciences culturelles et pour l'échange culturel
dans l'espace euro-méditerranéen

Foundation Euro - Mediterranean Knowledge Space (WEM)

Cultural-political collaboration and cultural exchange
in Euro-Mediterranean space



“From Dublin to Damascus, from the Niger River to the North Cape”

(Motto of WEM)

February 10th, 2014

The Foundation 'Euro-Mediterranean Knowledge Space (WEM)' NPO

Who we are. Mission and objectives

The Stiftung Wissensraum Europa-Mittelmeer (WEM) (Foundation 'Euro-Mediterranean Knowledge Space (WEM)') was founded in October 2010 in Rabat (Morocco) and now takes the form of a registered, non-profit organisation based in Stuttgart. The founding was supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), Stuttgart and Berlin. Ifa is still an essential privileged partner.

The objective of WEM is the intensification of dialogue and project-oriented cooperation between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries through cultural and information exchange, in particular through science and education. Central to the project is the development of an international network which is cultural studies methods and insights oriented. The **Euro-Mediterranean Space**, politically only partly organised within the boundaries of the Mediterranean Union, is understood, within the framework of the WEM project, as **'functional' space “from Dublin to Damascus, from the Niger to the North Cape”**. This kind of space is determined by a historically founded durable density of communication and interaction, it is dynamic and not identical to a space blocked by geographical criteria.

WEM understands the Euro-Mediterranean Space as a communication, knowledge and education space. The main emphasis of the WEM at present is on the Maghreb countries, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria. Libya will follow as soon as possible. Relations are being developed with Egypt and the Middle East. WEM considers Saharan (Sahel)Africa as an important part of the Euro-Mediterranean Space. Elements of a common history, multilingualism including European languages as well as Arabic, a partly shared education system, economic interdependency, immigration aspects and the Arabic presence, for

www.wissensraum-mittelmeer.org – www.wem-foundation.org

Präsident/ Président: Univ.Prof. Dr. Bernd Thum (Karlsruher Institut für Technologie/ KIT),
Albert-Ueberle-Str. 32, 69120 Heidelberg, Deutschland

Tel.: ++49-6221-47 28 65, Mobil: ++49-177-736 8806, Fax: ++49-6221-651 0653, e-Mail: thum@kit.edu

Vorsitzender des Beirats/ Président du Conseil consultatif: Ronald Grätz, Generalsekretär, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa),
Charlottenplatz 17, 70173 Stuttgart, Deutschland

Tel.: ++49-711-2225 116, Fax: ++49-711-2226 4346, e-Mail: generalsekretariat@ifa.de

example, in political-religious life, testify to this. Partnerships with institutions and scholars from Saharan Africa are developed, in particular with Senegal.

WEM's goal is to conduct a Euro-Mediterranean dialogue based on cultural scientific aspects and methods, thereby not only extending, deepening and streamlining the discussion but also fostering the awareness of interdependence and togetherness. The Foundation particularly values the fact that the cultural concepts and the theoretical work of the partners brought together are put into practice through subsequent projects. Ideally the projects do not come to a halt after the promotional period.

The interfacing role and function that **common cultural activities and cultural studies** offer form the criteria for choosing projects and partnerships. Moreover, the WEM Web site

www.wissensraum-mittelmeer.org or www.wem-fondation.org

is offering a public forum. Discourse is focussed on where the goal is a common development of the Euro-Mediterranean Space as a communication, knowledge and education space, for example:

- modernisation of traditional knowledge systems / knowledge regimes by integrating important elements of culturally specific knowledge of the 'North' and the 'South', generating this way a partly new stock of common cultural knowledge,
- policies of education taking into consideration selected elements of the cultural knowledge of each partner,
- sociocultural order (analysis and policies of society, culture, state, religion, human rights, concepts of history, (geo)politics, economy...).

Partners

Because of WEM's previous project history with cultural scientists and cultural administrators from north and South, spanning over many years, this information can only be **representative and selective**. The following partnerships are not institutionally formalised, they are rather agreements. They arise from common interests, from common project planning and cooperation. Due to WEM's network character, cooperations with cultural, academic and educational institutions develop themselves, for the most part, if not entirely through people (members) and project topics.

WEM's academic partners in the South often have a history that began before the founding of WEM. Because these structures already exist and reach far into the milieu of intellectual civil society, it is possible to win new partners.

Essential and accessible, to mention a few examples, are existing connections with the Department of Letters, Arts and Humanities of the University of La Manouba / Tunis, as well as to the Department of German Language and Literature Studies, also to the UNESCO chair on Comparative Studies of Religions and to the History Department of this university. Likewise, there are connections in place with the Research Laboratory of Culture, New Technologies and Development (CUNTIC) of the University of Tunis. WEM has further connections at its disposal including the Superior Institute of Theology at Ez-Zitouna University and the Education Department of the Université Virtuelle de Tunis.

A time-tested partnership exists in Morocco with the German Studies Department of the King Fahd Institute of Translation in Tangier / Tetouan. There are further connections based on partnerships with the University Mohamed V in Rabat / Agdal, with the University of Rabat / Souissi, with the University of Marrakech as well as with the Rabat National Library. There are starting points in Algeria in place for possible project cooperations with the University Algiers 2, the University of Oran and with ENSET Oran. Important partners in Saharan Africa are scholars of the University Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis in Senegal.

An institutional partner in the South is the Tariq Ibn Ziad Centre in Rabat. Good connections exist with the Anna Lind Foundation (ALS) in addition to the Maghreb offices of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Rabat and in Tunis as well as to the office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Tunis. WEM also cooperates with some Goethe Institutes like the Goethe Institute in Cairo.

Projects

As mentioned, WEM was founded in Rabat in October 2010. Since its foundation WEM has accomplished its tasks under the complicated conditions of the Arab transition. The Foundation lives through its members. So WEM can refer to many conferences which have been organized by its members as well as to publications dealing with its special topics. The volume "An der Zeitenwende. Europa, das Mittelmeer und die Arabische Welt" (At the Turning Point. Europe, the Mediterranean and the Arab World), edited by Bernd Thum as an ifa publication in 2012, unites articles written by WEM members from Europe, Arab countries and Saharan (Sahel)Africa.

Even though they must remain open to all innovative impulses coming from Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries, WEM activities will be focussed for the next years essentially on five large-scale projects:

- Extension and intensification of external and internal communication.
- Organisation and execution of conferences in cooperation with other institutions, on education in Euro-Mediterranean Space such as the conference on the theme 'Socialisation and Education in Euro-Mediterranean Space', which was organized in 2012 in Stuttgart by WEM, supported by Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Cologne.
- Encouragement and support for members in Europe, in the 'Arab World' and in Saharan (Sahel)Africa in initiating and organizing international conferences on the topic of Euro-Mediterranean knowledge space, policies and education.
- Continuation and extension of the project 'EuroMed MemoriaCarte', a virtual map of Euro-Mediterranean places of remembrance. This project is supported by the Allianz Kulturstiftung, Berlin (Cultural Foundation). Scientists from Europe, the Maghreb countries and Saharan (Sahel)Africa take part in this project which develops selected places of remembrance from European, Arab and Saharan points of view. The theme 'Euro-Mediterranean places of remembrance' has already been involved in the academic teaching at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), which traditionally includes Euro-Mediterranean contents.

- Realisation of a comparative 'European - Arabic Lexicon of Cultural Political Key Terms' with approx. 30-50 entries contributed by cultural scientists (including the younger generation) from Europe and the 'Arab World'. Comparative semantics of cultural political keywords have already been tested in the academic teaching, realized with master students at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in cooperation with students of the University of Tangier/ Tetouan.

These accomplishments and projects are all collaborative and bring scientists from Europe, the 'Arab world' and Saharan (Sahel)Africa together. Their aim is to allow interaction on equal ground to become a matter of course so that mutual development in traditional topics can win a new 'Euro-Mediterranean' dimension. Through a scientific and cultural exchange of information and orientations, new scientific components and new structures of cultural knowledge arise, making their way into the cultural awareness as well as cultural and education policies in Europe, into the Southern countries and finally in the whole Euro-Mediterranean space.

Univ. Prof. Dr. Bernd Thum
 President of WEM
 Karlsruher Institut für Technologie (KIT)
 Institut für Germanistik
 thum@kit.edu

Ronald Grätz
 President of the WEM Advisory Board
 Secretary General
 Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa)
 generalsekretär@ifa.de

WEM c/o Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa)
 Generalsekretariat
 Charlottenplatz 17
 70173 Stuttgart
 Tel. 0177-736 8806
 Fax 06221-6510 653
 e-mail: thum@kit.edu

Postadresse/ adresse postale:
 Univ.Prof. Dr. Bernd Thum
 Albert-Ueberle-Str. 32
 D-69120 Heidelberg