



## Consultation on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy Contribution of the French Euro-Med Network - Paris

The French Euro-Med Network is a member of the Euro-Med Non-Governmental Platform. Bringing together 44 French civil society organisations engaged in the Euro-Mediterranean region, it aims to:

- Federate these organisations in France in order to facilitate the exchange of practices, to ensure the flow of information, to support the sharing of ideas on Euro-Mediterranean issues and actions.
- Mobilise and promote the network's actions, develop joint initiatives and partnerships.
- Advocate for Euro-Mediterranean issues vis-à-vis the French public authorities and European institutions.
- Enhance the Euro-Med Platform's work through the specific contribution of the REF's members.

### **Network of French Civil Society Organisations**

Réseau Euromed France (REF)

c/o Solidarité Laïque

22 rue Corvisart

75013 Paris - France

Tel: 00 33 9 52 56 24 34

[ref@euromed-france.org](mailto:ref@euromed-france.org)

[www.euromed-france.org](http://www.euromed-france.org)

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# Introduction

*The present paper mainly concerns the Southern Neighbourhood of the ENP and proposes recommendations formulated collectively by civil society organisations in France that are committed to enhance the relations between Europe and the southern Mediterranean shore.*

Europe's determination to review the Neighbourhood Policy is based on a critical analysis of the situation in the region and the inadequate results achieved. This analysis and statement are widely shared by European and Mediterranean civil society.

Before specifically presenting the elements of the positioning of civil society organisations brought together by the REF, it is noteworthy to share some comments on the ENP itself. These comments are inspired by the "Green Paper" entitled *Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy* published on the 4 March 2015 that has launched the consultation on the ENP's review.

The first question that arises is that of the relevance of a geographical framework that includes rather heterogeneous countries from a historical and a geopolitical point of view. Moreover, these countries have extremely different aspirations and perspectives. In the East, the limits have appeared very clearly since the Ukrainian crisis due to the tensions with Russia, a daunting pole of attraction for some

eastern "neighbours". As for the South, in the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, anyone can note the great diversity of situations. More generally, the representation of the world behind the Neighbourhood Policy is that of the existence of a **centre**, Europe, and a **periphery** composed of a patchwork of countries whose only identifying factor is their proximity to Europe.

In this framework, the **bilateral relations** between the EU and each "neighbouring" country dominate and drain most of the financial resources, **to the detriment of the regional and multilateral dimension** that had characterised the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995).

The central operating principle of the ENP, the "**more for more**", has also been criticised. Indeed, conditionality has rather focused on economic policy choices than progress in terms of democratisation, respect for the rule of law and Human Rights, social protection and economic and social rights.

Another observation: **Trade – Security – Migration** remain the three major components, that is, in perfect continuity with the ENP's priorities from the beginning. **Security concerns** occupy an indeed central place; they appear to be the primary determination for the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Nevertheless, no analysis of the root causes of insecurity is proposed.

Yet the powerlessness of the international community against the occupation of the Palestinian Territories, the war in Syria, Iraq and Libya has a major impact on insecurity in the region. In addition, the persistence of poverty, inequality and the lack of opportunities for development and prosperity are among the root causes that contribute to the weakening of southern Mediterranean societies and instability.

We continue to deal with the symptoms instead of addressing the causes.

Lastly, although we can measure the negative impact on the entire development process of a policy based on the liberalisation of trade and foreign investment, the *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement* remains the flagship tool of the macroeconomic thinking of the ENP.

This approach is far from being based on Human Rights, social and economic rights. With the aim of building a wide area of peace and progress based on renewed relations between Europe and the partner countries, a **real and radical review** of the ENP is indeed necessary.

This explains why the public consultation launched by the European Commission was positively welcomed by civil society organisations committed to enhancing cooperation between the two shores for several years.

The French Euro-Med Network therefore intends to participate to the general and specific recommendations contributing to the redefinition of the content of a **new Mediterranean Policy** so that it would meet the expectations and needs of our societies.



## General Recommendations

### A. Initiate a new Mediterranean Policy by abandoning the Eurocentric vision of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The Mediterranean space is a **system of inter-dependencies**. The countries of the region share many problems but also many solutions. The new Euro-Mediterranean project must now be based on this awareness: the Euro-Mediterranean construction is **in the interest of each and everyone**. Despite the economic asymmetry, the countries of the northern shore and those of the southern shore can be full partners that value their complementarities.

Indeed, southern countries should cease to be **considered as simple peripheral neighbours** whose main aspiration is that of integrating the European market. It is urgent to open the debate on the new partnership modalities between the EU and the Mediterranean countries, taking account of the fact that they are opening up to other horizons and have been

forging relations with other non-Mediterranean actors (China, the Gulf, Russia, the United States but also African countries). Europe should replace the logic of “aid” or “assistance” with that of a real partnership based on shared and common interests.

The EU should finally accept that the will of emancipation that has accompanied the Arab Revolutions has radically **changed the way in which southern Mediterranean countries conceive themselves in the world**. Their relation to Europe has also changed: the last is no longer a model and nor the only reference. This is why the position of control sometimes tinged with paternalism that has characterised the European policy with regards to the Arab world for years, has become unacceptable for the public opinion, civil societies and the new elites of these Arab countries.

## B. Return to politics: Adopt a more ambitious approach placing political dialogue at the centre.

The construction of peaceful, integrated human and geopolitical space based on the enhancement of complementarities at Euro-Mediterranean level is a project that requires a long-term vision and above all, political ambition. Therefore, we cannot exclusively focus on the economic dimension and much less on security reasons. The “pragmatic” logic that has prevailed since 2008 (the idea of a Mediterranean of projects) makes sense only if the historical depth and the current complexity of relations between the Mediterranean countries are not eliminated. **The Mediterranean requires a “high”, demanding approach that includes the density of past and future issues.**

Placing **political dialogue at the centre with the aim of building peace** means that Mediterranean countries are not considered as mere “beneficiary countries” but rather as “**allies**”.

The new Mediterranean Policy should be an integral part of the European Union’s external policy. In order to ensure more coherence and greater clarity, it should become the responsibility of the European External Action Service (and be addressed in a distinct way from “enlargement”). It should also give way to greater financial commitment.

## C. Return to the “regional”: Promote multilateral cooperation and its positive impacts including ownership.

The urgent need is to build **a regional political project**, based on a roadmap that is shared by all countries of the region and with an annual calendar of multilateral, political and sectoral meetings. Indeed, that main challenges faced by our countries are of a regional nature, be it conflict prevention, the construction of democratic societies, development, employment of youth and women, climatic and environmental challenges, energy security, food security, water management and of course migration. All these issues **require regional responses**. They require that we work together and this is why the means devoted to the regional dimension should be substantially increased.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as a regional component of the Southern Neighbourhood has failed: its exclusively economic approach to the EuroMed region has quickly shown its limits; its lack of resources has completed its political marginalisation.

Moreover, returning to multilateral cooperation (political and sectoral) will have the positive effect of involving the region’s States (starting with EU Member States) more thoroughly. It will thus give way to a greater ownership of the Mediterranean political project by the countries concerned.

Lastly, the priority given to the regional dimension does not prevent the continuation of bilateral relations allowing the establishment of specific partnerships with each country. The priority given to the regional dimension is also compatible with sub-regional dynamics: the Maghreb, South-South, the Western Basin etc. and the cooperation and integration between territories. Cooperation can be established **at different levels with a rather flexible geography**.

## D. Support independent civil society as a strategic actor of the future.

Since the Barcelona Declaration (1995) and the first review of the ENP (2011), it was agreed that the role of civil society should be considered as crucial for Euro-Mediterranean relations but also in the policy making processes, both at local and regional levels.

Let us be clear: by civil society we refer to independent organisations that work in close collaboration with democratic social movements and human rights activists (and not organisations that have no relation to the realities existing on the ground, often co-opted by institutions, in place of independent organisations).

As actors of democratic change and development, civil society organisations (CSOs) have a significant role to play in the development of Euro-Mediterranean policies. The Arab uprisings have shown that countries do not necessarily speak with one voice. Under the “differentiation” principle, in each country, it is important to advance with social actors and stakeholders who share the same objectives towards progress and not only with governmental interlocutors.

The involvement of youth in civil society organisations, associative practices, learning about citizenship against the temptation of self-isolation or the use of violence, should be supported. It is indeed urgent to restore trust in democratic change among Mediterranean young people of both

shores who are disappointed and helpless when faced with violent excesses and the transformation of the revolutions in armed conflicts.

Since 2011, different tools have been created (the *Civil Society Facility*, the *European Endowment for Democracy*) and a process of *Structured Dialogue* has been established as from late 2013 in the framework the Southern Neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go in several directions:

- Political support should result in greater integration of CSOs during the various stages of the formulation and implementation of policies. Civil society should not be confined to ex post evaluation.
- Financial support to Euro-Mediterranean CSOs should not be politically conditioned. The independence of CSOs must be respected. Access to resources should be facilitated by the simplification of procedures, making them understandable, using accessible language and using the Arabic language (in the case of projects concerning societies of southern countries). Resources should be devoted to the sustainability of CSOs. Funds should not only be directed towards projects but also allow to cover operating expenses.

- The establishment of permanent and self-managed platforms for cooperation between CSOs in the region and institutions (European and national) is useful and recommended. The *Structured Dialogue* launched from late 2013 was hailed as a positive opportunity but there is room for improvement as it is piloted by the EU with a top-down approach. It needs to be sustained and empowered to meet the working standards of civil society in terms of transparency, collegiality and co-responsibility.

- All of the above-mentioned recommendations concern independent civil society both in Europe and in countries of the southern shore. CSOs of the North and those of the South have a long history of working together. Networking at regional level as well as the existing civil platforms should be supported, as they are also tools of solidarity when CSOs experience restrictions in expression and in their work.



## Priorities on cross cutting issues

### 1. Increased violence and the return of war: Building peace and preventing conflict.

The wide extent of the tragedy unfolding in the Middle East and the growing violence experienced in some Maghreb countries are unprecedented. The breaking of the authoritarian status quo and the uprisings of the Arab peoples for freedom and dignity have given way to a phase where the international order of the twentieth century in the Mediterranean is being called into question. The civil wars in Libya, Syria and Iraq added to the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories and the blockade of Gaza with its share of daily violence. Former and new non-state actors take centre stage and make the game of war even more complex.

Peace has declined in the region, precipitating millions of people into exile, misery and despair. However, the international community and the States of the region (both in the North and in the South) seem unable to find appropriate political responses to these challenges. As for the European Union, we can confirm its failure in dealing with humanitarian emergencies, in addressing the issue of the trade of weapons as well as the implementation of conflict prevention mechanisms on the long term.

Among its objectives, the new *European Neighbourhood Instrument* (ENI) provides for the building of trust and conflict resolution but the ENP was not equipped to address these situations.

### **Recommendations**

- The new Mediterranean Policy will have to find ways to respond quickly and actively for the maintenance of peace as well as for the resolution of frozen conflicts (Western Sahara, Cyprus). The resumption of Euromed Foreign Affairs Ministerial conferences could contribute to the long-term commitment of the region's States on all issues related to peace and war and above all, the Israeli Palestinian question and the international recognition of the Palestinian State.
- In this framework, it is urgent to establish a Euromed body for political dialogue able to build relationships of trust and prevent conflict in compliance with international law.
- The escalation of extreme violence and conflict raises the issue of impunity. The credibility of Europe and the Mediterranean States would be enhanced if in the case of serious crimes, mechanisms ensuring the accountability of the perpetrators were established.

## 2. Inequalities: The need for a new development paradigm

Ten years after the launch of the ENP, the Mediterranean partner countries are still experiencing high levels of poverty and social exclusion (unemployment, especially women, precarious situation of young workers, limited access to economic and social rights, deterioration of the rights of migrant workers) and more generally, the lack of inclusive and comprehensive social policies. This observation leads to the conclusion that the development model mainly based on trade liberalisation and growth should be called into question. The Arab uprisings in 2011 have indeed demonstrated that there can be no political reform without social justice and that no economic prosperity is sustainable without social protection.

Yet, the economic policy priorities of the ENP were more dictated by the interests of European countries (overcoming the economic crisis, the creation of jobs in Europe) than by the economic interests and social emergencies of the southern countries (such as the development of a southern industrial policy to create jobs). The EU and its Member States have placed at the centre of the ENP, an economic model that has not only failed in Europe but which has also betrayed the very values which Europe is expected to promote in terms of social rights, the struggle against inequality and solidarity.

### ***Recommendations***

- A new development paradigm should be supported: Euro-Mediterranean cooperation should pursue its development goals based on reducing inequalities, creating decent and sustainable employment, tax justice, the promotion of social protection systems (welfare benefits, health education etc.); furthermore, European policies for trade and investment should be consistent with these goals.
- In order to include these goals in bilateral negotiations, it is essential to ensure transparency, public consultation of stakeholders and involve independent trade unions and civil society organisations.
- As for financial support: the logic of assistance should be abandoned and financial aid should be considered as an investment for the future that is beneficial for both partner countries and for Europe. The strong inter-dependencies between the Mediterranean shores should be enhanced.

### 3. Sea of death: Reopen the Mediterranean to the movement of persons.

Every day, war, repression and poverty incite thousands of people (men, women and children) to flee their homes and countries in search of protection and a better future. The majority of people seek to reach other southern countries. Many of them arrive on the European Mediterranean coasts.

Since early 2015, nearly 2,000 people drowned in the Mediterranean, victims of irresponsible traffickers. The extent of this phenomenon is unprecedented, and this directly concerns the inadequacy of the European response to this humanitarian emergency of primary importance. The security and control measures adopted via the Frontex Agency are ineffective and above all, they violate the rights of migrants.

This inconsistency is particularly flagrant since it is the European institutions themselves that recognise the fact that immigration is a source of economic wealth and social progress.

No Euro-Mediterranean policy will be credible if we continue to draw up insurmountable barriers, obstacles and walls to the movement of people between the countries of the region.

#### ***Recommendations***

- Adopt an approach to migration based on rights and stop addressing migration as a security or anti-terrorism issue. This implies the application of international human rights and international humanitarian law standards.
- Establish a system of co-responsibility among the States for search and rescue at sea.
- Ensure full respect of the right to asylum and the right to international protection for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Reopen the channels of legal migration as the only effective way to fight against human trafficking in cooperation with all the region's countries.
- Involve CSOs in a full and effective way in the on-going negotiations on Mobility Partnerships.
- Reopen the Euro-Mediterranean space to the movement of persons, by facilitating visas especially humanitarian visas, generalising multiple-entry visas, removing short-stay visas and providing free-of-charge visas.

## 4. Restriction of liberties: The centrality of the Human Rights issue.

The observation of the developments in the region shows an alarming deterioration of the situation of human rights and democracy. Some countries of the southern shore are experiencing strong restriction of freedoms: violation of individual liberties, violations of the freedom of association and expression, repressive laws of the right to demonstrate, restriction on the access to information and reduced access to funding sources.

In the current context, European countries do not resist to the temptation of security and freedom-destroying laws.

These unfavourable conditions limit democratic participation and the exercise of citizenship especially by young associative activists that are sometimes pressured, stigmatised or even experience violent forms of repression.

Since economic reform is at the heart of the ENP, it is important to remember that this objective cannot be achieved in an environment where the rule of law and human rights are not respected, where there is no judicial independence, no equal rights, no respect for fundamental freedoms, no involvement of citizens.

### **Recommendations**

- The new Mediterranean Policy should be consistent with European and international Human Rights instruments such as the new *EU Action Plan on Human rights and Democracy* for 2015-2019.
- Conditionality in political cooperation with countries in the area should be based on human rights and progress towards democracy. In line with this, any cooperation must be questioned when Human Rights violations are observed.
- The new Mediterranean Policy should guarantee the protection of men and women who defend Human Rights peacefully and therefore face threats and repressive measures.

## 5. Women's Rights: The significant gap between words and actions.

Equality between women and men is a principle and a universal right enshrined in European and international instruments. Yet, gender equality remains a challenge and a goal to be reached both at Mediterranean and European levels.

The issue of Women's Rights is a lever that will in turn facilitate other changes.

The economic crisis and the political choices supposed to face it have seriously affected the economic and social rights of women by weakening their participation in the economic (and political) life of our societies. This constitutes a major obstacle to development.

Moreover, the crisis, wars and conflicts have directly led to increased violence against women.

Henceforth, there is an increasing gap between declarations and action plans adopted by national and European institutions and their application in the reality of our countries. In the Euro-Mediterranean regional framework, since the Istanbul-Marrakesh process (2006-2009) and the Euromed Ministerial Conference in Paris (September 2013), the commitments made in order to "achieve gender equality, preventing all forms of discrimination and ensuring the protection of the rights of women" are far from being taken seriously and implemented.

### ***Recommendations***

- Integrate the gender dimension into all aspects of the future Mediterranean Policy.
- Make the struggle to end violence against women and impunity a highest priority by adopting and applying binding national and regional legal frameworks against gender violence. Make the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe), an element of the conditionality of rights in Euro-Mediterranean bilateral agreements.
- Establish mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of action plans adopted and legal mechanisms sanctioning violations of fundamental rights, without which gender equality remains a dead letter.

## 6. Climate change: The Mediterranean, one of the most vulnerable regions.

The facts are known: water resources (especially in the Maghreb) are rare, unevenly distributed and characterised by a high temporal variability and recurrent droughts. The situation of access to drinking water and sanitation in the Mediterranean is not satisfactory: 180 million Mediterraneans currently suffer from water stress. 60% of the Mediterranean population is “water-poor”. Moreover, the extension of irrigated agricultural land and the use of irrigation techniques that are not water saving, the diversification of agricultural products, urbanisation, industrial development and tourism are among the many factors that contribute to the growing pressure on water resources.

It is also recognised that the Mediterranean region will be greatly affected by climate change. According to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), a temperature rise of 2 to 3°C is expected in the Mediterranean by 2050, and 3 to 5°C by 2100. Summer precipitation could decrease by 35% on the southern shore and 25% on the northern shore by the end of the century.

The Mediterranean countries are already facing major problems related to water stress, desertification, loss of biodiversity and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. Climate change will most likely worsen these problems, leading to significant human and economic losses.

Lastly, the decline of water resources in a region that consumes more than 70% (the southern shore) of water for agriculture strongly raises the issue of food security in these countries in the coming years.

### **Recommendations**

- It is necessary to develop and implement *Integrated Water Resources Management* (IWRM) at different territorial levels. It is important to adapt this concept of IWRM in order to make it accessible to as many people as possible for a better and more significant implementation.
- Adapting to climate change impacts on water resources not only requires technical adjustments but especially political, institutional and behavioural ones. Political strategies must be consistent with local issues.
- Develop the capacity building of stakeholders: from the capitalisation and dissemination of information to training, sharing of experiences, development of partnerships and support given to stakeholders for better resource efficiency.
- Develop genuine agricultural policies that promote natural resource conservation practices. For instance, supporting and promoting the development of family and small-scale farming would contribute to fight against food insecurity.

## 7. Culture: A sector that is constantly side lined.

Art and culture are an extraordinary potential for Euro-Mediterranean relations. Art and culture are vectors of values of freedom. They are instruments of emancipation and contribute to the learning of citizenship and contribute to the development of critical thinking.

This statement was already present in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995.

In 2007, in the framework of the resolution of the EU Council, *A European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World*, culture is recognised as a vital element in the external relations of the European Union. The link between culture and development was also strongly recognised.

Nevertheless, despite the two cultural components on access to culture and the promotion of cultural diversity included in the thematic programmes of the EU, culture continues to occupy a marginal place in Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Culture is largely absent from Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the framework of the new *European Neighbourhood Instrument* (ENI) 2014-2020 launched in March 2014.

The only tool dedicated to culture in the region is the Anna Lindh Foundation, an intergovernmental organisation that, since its inception ten years ago, has shown its inadequacy to meet the sector's needs and the mission for which it was created.

### **Recommendations**

In the future Mediterranean Policy:

- a. Consider culture as a transversal dimension in all instruments and programmes (thematic and geographic).
  - b. Initiate a real *Euro-Mediterranean Strategy for culture* aimed at meeting the professional needs of the arts and culture sector.
  - c. Establish a specific programme devoted to fund independent Euro-Mediterranean artistic and cultural projects (in the field of youth and creativity).
- Promote freedom of expression, freedom to protest peacefully and artistically by fostering an enabling environment for culture and the arts in each country. Promote independent and pluralist information and alternative and associative media.
  - Provide priority support to the independence of culture: independent cultural actors, independent cultural initiatives and independent spaces.
  - Remove barriers to mobility that is essential for the professional career and training of artists but also for the circulation of artistic works.
  - Substantially simplify the applications for funding procedures to make public funds devoted to culture accessible to cultural and artistic CSOs.

# Conclusion

The European Union has now two alternative options. Either it only aims to manage the so-considered present threats (migration, terrorism) and therefore simply provides financial assistance to a limited number of countries in the hope of securing its borders.

Or, together with its partners and allies, it aims to become the driving force of an ambitious wide-ranging project: the establishment of an integrated macro region (positive and active in the globalisation process) where the Mediterranean would be a geographical centre but whose frontiers would go beyond the current neighbourhood.

A broader geography including both portions of Africa, the entire Arab world and the new Middle East of the twenty-first century would be the framework for new and definitely postcolonial international relations with a Europe that is determined to reconnect with its values and ambitions.

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Réseau Euromed France (REF)  
Marion ISVI – Executive Director  
c/o Solidarité Laïque  
22 rue Corvisart  
75013 Paris FRANCE  
Tel: 0033 9 52 56 24 34  
[ref@euromed-france.org](mailto:ref@euromed-france.org)  
[www.euromed-france.org](http://www.euromed-france.org)