

ECDPM contribution to the EU consultation: “Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy”

From: European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)

Type of correspondent: Think-tank

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The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) decided to contribute to the consultation on the ENP review because the Southern Neighborhood (in particular North Africa) is a key region for a number of topics on which the organisation works. Namely, the issues of migration and development, EU trade relations with Africa, cultural relations, and regional approaches to the Sahel. The rationale for ECDPM's engagement in this exercise is to share knowledge accumulated over the years but also to reflect on the ongoing changes in the region and in the EU policies in the region, and their potential consequences.

This contribution is based on previous research and analysis of ECDPM staff on the Neighbourhood and more broadly on Africa-Europe relations.² Therefore it replies to a small number of questions, and is limited to the North Africa (and partially to the Mediterranean region and the Middle East).

To some extent, the contribution looks at the ENP as a “toolbox” or container of different instruments – an approach that some have recently argued the EU should adopt.³ The tools of the ENP can be tweaked and improved but the EU needs to find a long-term vision for the relationship with the North African countries, taking into account what is feasible, in light of interests, aspirations and opportunities on both sides of the Mediterranean. Yet the ENP review should not occur in splendid isolation from the many other reviews of the EU's policy frameworks currently ongoing such as the ones for Europe's global and security strategy, the future of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between ACP-EU countries.⁴

Key messages for the ENP review

- The tools of the ENP can be tweaked and improved but the **EU needs to find a long-term vision** for the relationship with the North African countries, taking into account what is feasible, in light of interests, aspirations and opportunities on both sides of the Mediterranean.
- **Multiple layers of regional formats** exist between North Africa and countries south of the Sahara, challenging the idea of a single neighbourhood. North African countries have different regional approaches and needs. To have an added value in bringing Northern African stakeholders together with their Southern neighbours, the EU will need to engage creatively on specific stimulating concrete topics and entry points in a flexible manner, in a flexible manner, while avoiding the dispersion and duplication of efforts. The environment might not be ripe for regional integration but the EU needs to pay heed to long-term aspirations – including those coming bottom-up from people and societies – and support them.
- The recognition of the complexity of **migration flows**, the development potential of migration as well as the challenges emerging from irregular flows have led to responses that are more multi-dimensional and comprehensive at the outset. Yet, the EU still struggles to bring together its various external action policies and tools under a common strategic and comprehensive vision for the Neighborhood and the nexus of migration, security and development. A comprehensive policy needs to consider local, national and regional dynamics south of the Sahara. Yet, responses will be incomplete in absence of domestic engagement of African states as well as a discussion on aspects of internal policy coherence for migration and development including legal migration opportunities with EU MS.
- **Cultural relations** between the two shores of the Mediterranean have the potential to increase mutual understanding between European and Arab citizens. The EU should support cultural relations in a mutually beneficial way, involving grassroots cultural actors and promoting mobility and people-to-people exchanges. To do so the “cultural sensitivity” of EU and MS needs to be enhanced.
- The Arab Spring put **governance, democratic transition and civil society support** high on the EU agenda, but the EU response, based on wrong premises, largely failed to deliver. In parallel a new approach to civil society has been developed. This **approach empowers the EU to work with local, national, regional non-state actors** in a more sophisticated and flexible manner (empowering civil society to interact with

² Examples of ECDPM work on the Neighbourhood include: research and consultation workshops in the Neighbourhood for the Preparatory Action for culture in EU external relations; research on regional diplomacy in the Sahel (ongoing); facilitation of dialogue and support to non-state actors in North Africa (ongoing); migration and development (ongoing); comparative analysis on EU trade policies in the Mediterranean and Africa (2012); evaluation of EU cooperation with Georgia (forthcoming); evaluation of EU cooperation with the Occupied Palestinian Territories (2014); political economy analyses of regional integration in Africa (ongoing); analysis on Africa-Europe relations (ongoing).

³ Dennison, S. & Witney, N. 2015. Europe's Neighbourhood: Crisis as the new normal. ECFR Policy Memo.

⁴ A similar point has been made about discussions of the future of the EU-ACP relations, see, Bossuyt J. & Sherriff. 2015. Towards a more coherent EU external action: where does the ACP fit? ECDPM Talking Points, February

authorities), to invest in better knowledge, and promote more coordination with Member States. All these benefits can be reaped provided the EU has leadership and political capacity and Member States are on board.

- **Structural challenges** impede the EU external action and development policy in the Neighbourhood. Some solutions to enhance the flexibility of EU financial instruments are being experimented but other improvements – for instance becoming a “learning” organization – will require longer-term changes. Coordination with Member States needs to become more systematic, but the bigger question is that EU and MS have sent mixed messages due to different priorities. In a context marked by the increasing presence of other powers, **EU and MS efforts need to converge**.

1. Working with African neighbours: regional approaches and integration (trade) and the multilateral dimension

Key message: Multiple layers of regional formats exist between North Africa and countries south of the Sahara, challenging the idea of a single neighbourhood. North African countries have different regional approaches and needs. To have an added value in bringing Northern African stakeholders together with their Southern neighbours, the EU will need to engage creatively on specific stimulating concrete topics and entry points in a flexible manner, while avoiding the dispersion and duplication of efforts. The environment might not be ripe for regional integration but the EU needs to pay heed to long-term aspirations – including those coming bottom-up from people and societies – and support them.

The ENP is a bilateral framework that underpins relations between the EU and the countries of the Neighbourhood. In the South the multilateral fora is the Union for the Mediterranean, that brings together the EU (including the MS) and the partner countries.

The consultation paper asks how to cooperate with African countries in particular in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa. It also asks how to cooperate with other multilateral frameworks.

Taking stock of some regional cooperation in North Africa, Sahel and Horn of Africa, the existence of multiple-layers of formats emerges.

The five “neighbours” of the EU are members of different regional groupings which include sub-Saharan African states. For instance Egypt is not part of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), while Morocco is not a member of the African Union (AU). Intra-regional trade among North African countries remains low⁵ - a number of reasons, ranging from market integration to political reluctance to sovereignty transfers, which explain the limited implementation of trade agreements.⁶ In fact interstate relations are complex and often contentious – for instance Western Sahara continues to be a source of friction.

The following examples give a snapshot of the diversity of approaches of some North African countries towards the region.

Egypt, as a member of COMESA⁷, is a relevant player in dynamics happening way more south in the African continent. COMESA offers a market for Egypt’s exports: Egypt registered a net surplus with the COMESA region between 2002-2011, though exports declined in 2011 due to political instability.⁸ However trade with Africa remains a little part of the commercial relations of Egypt with the world: Arab countries and Europe remain the main buyers of Egyptian goods.⁹ Another relevant framework for Egypt is the Nile Basin

⁵ Al-Atrash & Yousef. 2000. Intra-Arab Trade: is it too little? IMF Working Paper

⁶ Hoekman & Sekkat. 2010. Arab Economic Integration: The missing links. Working Paper.

⁷ Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), created in 1994. Egypt joined in 1999.

⁸ Elmorsy, S. 2014. Determinants of trade intensity of Egypt with COMESA Countries. Bandung: Journal of the Global South.

⁹ According to Egyptian government’s statistics, in 2013 Arab countries were the first trading partners for exports (5982 million \$), followed by Europe (5323 million \$). Sub-Saharan African countries received only 907 million \$. It is worth noting that until 2011 Libya was the first export trading partner in COMESA (34% of exports), followed by

Initiative (NBI), which however it boycotted in recent years following disagreement over reassignment of water shares by the 2010 Entebbe convention.¹⁰ 2015 saw a more conciliatory Egyptian stance: Egypt participated for the first time in 5 years in an NBI meeting in February. Furthermore in March a declaration of principles was signed by Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan, committing parties to more dialogue on Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam.¹¹

Another example is **Algeria**, which, after the "black decade" of the 90s, is now increasingly involved in the Sahara-Sahel region. The principle of non-interference underpins Algeria's relations with its neighbours, however the crisis in Mali and Libya and the terrorist threats close to its borders have led to some military operations in Saharan and Sahelian countries and security cooperation, including with France.¹² Activism is evident at the political level: Algeria mediated the peace negotiations between the Malian government and the armed groups, concluded recently with the signature of the Algiers agreement and hosted negotiations of Libyan factions. The country's potential to become a continental¹³ and international power¹⁴ is however not shared by all analysts.¹⁵

Lastly, **Morocco** is investing in **West Africa** - a market to be explored, in face of the recovering European economies - as its economic and public diplomacy show.¹⁶ Beyond business deals, Morocco has been promoting its model of state-religion relations in West African countries experiencing religious radicalisation. In particular training of local imams in the Moroccan tradition of Islam is promoted¹⁷ - European countries like France are also deepening cooperation on this issue. The increased proactiveness of Morocco in West Africa should not be read purely in terms of decreased attractiveness of Europe (the DCFTA is under negotiation) but also in terms of regional leadership. At multilateral level, Morocco remains outside the AU, but has tried to revive the CEN-SAD¹⁸ and expand its competences of the organisation to cover security.¹⁹

The examples show the existence of multiple layers of constructs - institutionalised or informal - in the region. When dealing with common regional problems of North Africa, West Africa and Sahel countries - like illicit trafficking, border management, irregular migration and smuggling, terrorism, natural resources management - there is not a single encompassing framework²⁰ gathering all the relevant actors.²¹ For

Sudan (31% of exports). While trade relations might have changed in recent years due to the unstable political situation, the statistics show that Egypt's integration in African markets is still limited.

¹⁰ Aman, A. 2015, Will Egypt seek Nile River agreement with upstream countries? [Al Monitor](#).

¹¹ Aman, A. 2015. Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia inch toward resolving Nile dam crisis. [Al Monitor](#)

¹² On this point cfr. Salim Chena on [Le Nouvel Observateur \(2014\)](#) and « [L'Algérie : de la puissance idéologique à l'hégémonie sécuritaire](#) », in Alain Antil, Mansouria Mokhefi, *Le Maghreb et son Sud : vers des liens renouvelés*, Paris, IFRI/CNRS éditions, 2012.

¹³ The African Union commissioners for Peace and Security have been Algerian (current commissioner Smail Chergui and former Commissioners Ramtane Lamamra and Said Djinnit). Algeria has however traditionally conducted security cooperation bilaterally (on this point see Ingerstad G., Lindell M.T., *Stabilising Mali. Neighbouring states' political and military engagement*, FOI, 2015).

¹⁴ As an example in terms of resources, Algeria - the largest country on the continent - was Africa's 4th largest economy by GDP in 2014 (source: [World Bank](#)) and Algeria's oil company Sonatrach was listed as Africa's biggest company in 2013 (source: [The Africa Report](#)).

¹⁵ The [African Futures project of the Institute for Security Studies](#) argues that Algeria is punching below its weight (according to a set of parameters) and is directed towards a status quo or stagnating trajectory.

¹⁶ See "[Entretien avec Youssef Amrani sur la politique africaine du Maroc](#)".

¹⁷ See [Invité Afrique: Bakary Sambe, auteur, et chercheur au Centre d'étude des religions](#) and [Tadlaoui, G. Morocco's religious diplomacy in Africa, FRIDE. 2015.](#)

¹⁸ CEN-SAD is the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, founded in 1998 under the impulse of Libya's leadership and now including 27 countries.

¹⁹ Daemers, J. 2014. [Maghreb-Sahel security cooperation: from mirage to reality?](#) in Barrios C., Koepf, T. *Re-mapping the Sahel: transnational security challenges and international responses*. EUISS Report No19. 24 June 2014.

²⁰ Helly, D., Thérout-Bénoni, L.-A., Galeazzi, G., Maïga, I., Ouédraogo, F. 2015. *Sahel Strategies: Why Coordination is Imperative*. (ISS Policy Brief 76). Dakar : ISS.

²¹ OECD (2014), *An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel: Geography, Economics and Security*, West African Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris.

instance the G5 Sahel²² does not include Maghreb countries while the Ministerial coordination platform for Sahel strategies includes international organisations (EU, UN, WB) and regional organisations from both North and West Africa²³ but the buy-in of states is quite low.

Two takeaways emerge from this overview of regional initiatives between countries on the two banks of the Sahara.

First, make the most efficient use of existing and functioning cooperation frameworks and processes according to what they have proven able to do. At present the region is characterised by a multiplicity of frameworks and many bilateral initiatives happening outside them. To have an added value in bringing Northern African stakeholders together with their Southern neighbours, the EU will need to engage creatively on specific stimulating concrete topics and entry points (for instance job creation, water, cross-border cooperation, youth, new technologies, religion) and in a flexible manner, while avoiding the dispersion and duplication of efforts.

A more pluralistic set of policies by the EU towards Southern Neighbourhood countries is already emerging, according to experts.²⁴ This differentiated engagement is inevitable also in the multilateral dimension. This approach requires a flexible and context sensitive engagement of the EU through the ENP. Staff working on different regions (and responding to different chains of command) should be mobilised around specific problems, while financial instruments (EDF & ENI) should work in synergy, where appropriate.

Second, the EU has a commitment to regional integration but the regional environment needs to be ripe for this to happen. The current conflict in Libya and the ongoing tensions between Morocco and Western Sahara show that the path to regional integration is tortuous. The EU should pay heed to long-term aspirations towards regional integration, which might reacquire traction as stability returns. Those aspirations need evidently to be supported by the EU - and by the states of the regions - through relevant formats. Beyond state-to-state relations, there are also demands by people and societies – for instance a more conducive regional environment for private sector investments²⁵ or mobility of cultural operators. These aspirations could provide a substratum to support bottom-up regional integration. The key dilemma is to have a field-informed and adaptable policy that allows for cooperation on concrete problems needing responses in the immediate while not neglecting long-term support to regional integration, key for sustainable solutions.²⁶

2. Migration and mobility

Key message: the recognition of the complexity of migration flows is leading to responses that are more multi-dimensional as the outsourcing of migration control to Mediterranean partners proved its limits. A comprehensive policy needs to consider local, national and regional dynamics south of the Sahara. However responses will be incomplete in absence of domestic engagement of African states and a discussion on legal migration opportunities with EU MS.

²² Created in February 2014, the G5 Sahel includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger. The aim is to cooperate on security matters, with support from France. The G5 has also proposed an investment plan for long-term development. For more information see <http://www.grip.org/fr/node/1607>.

²³ Created in November 2013 following a joint high level visit by UN, WB and AfDB to the region, the Platform includes representatives of UN, AU, EU, WB, ECOWAS, AfDB, IDB, OIC, AMU, CEN-SAD, ECCAS and the states of the region.

²⁴ On this point see Youngs, R. 2015. [20 Years of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership](#). Mediterranean Politics.

²⁵ Konsentio. 2014. [Making the case for Maghreb business in times of change](#).

²⁶ Political economy type of methodologies can provide knowledge of incentives and disincentives that played a role in promoting or hampering regional integration, in North Africa, but also throughout the continent. See for instance Byiers, B., Vanheukelom, J., Kingombe, C.K.M. 2015. [A five lenses framework for analysing the political economy in regional integration](#). (Discussion Paper 178). Maastricht: ECDPM.

The EU policy towards migration from the Mediterranean remains fragmented - even though the EU's 'Global Approach to Migration and Mobility' (GAMM) and the European Agenda on Migration aims to bring coherence - and is still largely characterised by a security-driven approach.²⁷ There is increasing consensus among experts and stakeholders that migration flows from Africa to Europe are part of a long-term multi-dimensional phenomenon that needs to be addressed strategically and comprehensively - not only focusing on short-term border control and rescue of migrants at sea.

Migrant flows from Africa to Europe via the Mediterranean actually consist of the entwinement of diverse migratory and mobility drivers that are complex to grasp and address. The boundaries between forced and voluntary migration can be blurred. For instance economic migrants moving to Libya to work in the reconstruction of the country after the revolution were forced to flee the country as fighting between armed groups increased.²⁸ Studies show the complexity of push and pull factors, and perceptions of risks, shaping individual decisions to migrate through the Mediterranean sea.²⁹ Understanding the driving forces of peoples' migration decisions are key for appropriate policy responses that go beyond reactive approaches.

Despite the reality of mixed flows, a large percentage of migrants currently crossing through the Mediterranean originate from countries like Syria, Eritrea, or Somalia and have a strong claim to refugee status and protection under international law.³⁰ Nevertheless, policy responses are often framed as the fight against 'irregular' migration rather than as the need to address a humanitarian protection crisis comprehensively both in the region and internationally.

Migration in the Mediterranean cannot be tackled without considering the **southern bank of the Sahara**. North African countries are increasingly – and have been traditionally - a migration destination.³¹ Migration in the region has been a way to cope with shocks and crisis and to deal with economic, climate and personal insecurity. Though the EU has been supportive of strengthening capacity in the neighbourhood to deal with mixed flows of migrants, there has been an underlying tendency from the EU has been to outsource border management to the North African countries.³² The tightening of national legislation and border controls by North African countries, following pressure from the EU, has not led to a curbing of migration but to an increase in migrants crossing borders clandestinely.³³

Readmission agreements have been a core component of the EU migration policy,³⁴ even though analysts have warned of the risks that overly focusing on such agreements can obstruct relations with the EU's partners and if applied and enacted in states incapable of human rights protection of refugees may against the EU's fundamental values.³⁵

The situation of illegality has created a local economy or business of smuggling migrants in countries regions that migrants have to cross.³⁶ Creating alternative sources of revenue for local communities in the migration source countries but also in the transit countries is a necessary complement to migration policies.

²⁷ Manrique Gil et al. 2014. [Mediterranean flows into Europe. EP DG EXPO Policy Brief.](#)

²⁸ Roman, E. 2015. [Mediterranean Flows into Europe. Refugees or Migrants?](#) IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook Med. 2015.

²⁹ Townsend & Oomen. Before the Boat: Understanding the Migrant Journey. 2015. MPI Europe.

³⁰ See for instance data reported by the BBC.

³¹ See for instance the [World Bank's](#) report "Labor Migration from North Africa".

³² Del Sarto, R. 2009. Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU's Southern Buffer Zone. In *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflicts and Memory in a Transnational World*, edited by Dimitar Bechev and Kalypso Nicolaidis, London: I.B Tauris, 2009.

³³ On intra-African migration as a factor of economic development in North and West Africa and on the consequences of EU migration policies see Brachet, J. The blind spot of repression: migration policies and human survival in the Central Sahara In Thanh-Dam Truong (ed.), Gasper D. (ed.). *Transnational migration and human security : the migration-development-security nexus*. 2011.

³⁴ Please refer to the EU's website for more information on the [Global Approach to Migration and Mobility](#).

³⁵ See Carrera & al. 2013. EU migration policy after the Arab spring. Policy Paper Institut Delors.

³⁶ Lacher, W. 2012. [Organised crime and conflict in the Sahel-Sahara region](#). Carnegie.

The approach has also led to the emergence of new realities for migrants in North African countries, which have become immigration countries and not only transit countries, often characterised by exclusion and discrimination.³⁷ The integration of migrants and refugees across the host societies in the MENA region and in Africa is another challenge.

Migration is multi-faceted and requires a multi-dimensional response, which can be effective only with a strong engagement of EU Member States but also of source, transit and destination countries on the African continent. Migrants are moved by aspirations, which are about democratic participation and inclusive societies as much as they are about economic opportunities. EU interventions need to fall on fertile ground to achieve sustainable impact. The upcoming Africa-Europe summit of Malta in fall 2015 can be a moment to start this kind of dialogue.

Responding in a multi-dimensional way includes also the provision of legal ways to emigrate. The potential for mutual benefits from migration for European and African societies has been widely discussed³⁸ yet little progress has been made so far in opening **channels for legal migration**. Member States have the ultimate decision power on admission of economic migrants in their territories.³⁹ However perceptions of risks and therefore of needs are not uniform⁴⁰ and MS seem reluctant to engage in a discussion on a long-term vision for legal migration. In the absence of appetite for such a discussion, the EU's response to the migration crisis will probably be incomplete.

3. Cultural relations and intercultural dialogue

Key message: cultural relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean have the potential to increase mutual understanding between European and Arab citizens. The EU should support cultural relations in a mutually beneficial way, involving grassroots cultural actors and promoting mobility and people-to-people exchanges. To do so the “cultural sensitivity” of EU and MS needs to be enhanced.

Throughout history the Mediterranean has long been a space of interactions between peoples, cities and societies – which still exists, physically and virtually.⁴¹ Despite contacts and some common attitudes, misconceptions and stereotypes remain. The EU should take cultural perceptions and relations seriously.

In fact the Eurobarometer Neighbourhood surveys show that the image of the EU in the Southern Neighbourhood countries remains broadly in the positive, but has experienced a downward trend from 2012 to 2014. On many issues, in particular on economic growth, trade, education, but also democracy and human rights, the populations think that the EU has a role to play.⁴² In parallel, the perceptions of the region in Europe should not be overlooked: perceptions of Islam – often negative – are frequently the dominant lens through which European societies look at North Africa and the Middle East.⁴³ Cultural misconceptions can be a source of conflicts and culture can be activated in disputes.

For this reason the ongoing reflections on the EU cultural strategy need to inform the review of the ENP, not only concerning the cultural sector but also as a way to approach the overall relations with Mediterranean countries. In particular, enhancing the **cultural sensitivity** of EU and MS working with partners from the Arab world is necessary to increase mutual understanding.

³⁷ Scheele, J. 2012. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. 2012.

³⁸ European Political Strategy Centre. 2015. [Legal Migration in the EU From Stop-Gap Solutions to a Future-Proof Policy](#). EPSC Strategic Notes.

³⁹ See the EC's communication "[European agenda on migration](#)" of 13 May 2015.

⁴⁰ Parkes, R. 2014. [Integrating EU defence and migration policies in the Mediterranean](#). FRIDE Working Paper.

⁴¹ See the results of the Annah Lindh Foundation's 2014 report, [The Mediterranean as a Meaningful Space](#).

⁴² For more details see the European Neighbourhood Barometer, [Autumn 2014](#).

⁴³ Mohammed, M. 2014. [Islamophobic Trends in Europe](#). IEMed. Mediterranean Yearbook. 2014.

Recommendations from the [Preparatory Action for Culture in EU External Relations](#) on the Southern Neighbourhood include:

- Promote effective multilingual and multimedia communication (including working on the injection of modern vocabulary in Arabic language) and more equal cooperation.
- Cultural cooperation should meet the needs of local partners and be mutually beneficial, thus avoiding “nation branding” approaches.
- Strengthen contacts and exchanges (mobility).
- Support local capacity building, knowledge sharing and skills transferring, to promote a sustainable local cultural environment.
- Adopt a balanced approach between working with the government and formal institutions and supporting independent and grassroots cultural actors.

The need for a modernised and wider **geographic scope** taking into account globalisation, and digitalisation dynamics in the Mediterranean societies themselves, beyond institutional and territorial boundaries is expressed by actors in the cultural domain. Some African cultural organisations - like Arterial Network - have promoted continent wide initiatives such as the annual [African Creative Economy Conference](#). Similarly, mobility networks such as the Roberto Cimetta Fund have already broadened the scope of their cooperation with Arab partners, bringing it beyond the Euro-Mediterranean framework and opening it to other parts of the world (Asia, Central America). There is potential from opening Euro-Mediterranean frameworks to southern partners according to a network approach.

Mobility is key to foster deep cultural relations between countries and populations. In the course of the consultations and workshops done in the framework of the Preparatory Action for Culture in EU External Relations, a strong wish for more people-to-people contacts emerged. Tandem exchanges, mentorship initiatives, and European residencies programs are extremely valued - and the work of cultural foundations in Europe and in the Arab world (like European Cultural Foundation, Roberto Cimetta Fund, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, Mimeta, etc.) is much appreciated. In the medium term however sustainable cultural relations depend on the degree of direct access to each others’ countries and cultures. Cultural actors expressed the need for more flexible visa policies to be able to meaningfully participate in the cultural life of an increasingly inter-connected world. Proposals have been made already like the idea of an European cultural pass.⁴⁴ Research and debate on artistic mobility is ongoing⁴⁵ and can provide additional food for thought.

But **mobility works both ways**. Artists and cultural operators consulted wish not only to learn from European expertise but also to exchange with their European peers in a mutually beneficial way. Participants in the Preparatory Action workshops and consultations noted the need for more European artists - especially grassroots - to visit, co-work, co-create and share their experience in North African countries, to the benefit of larger groups of cultural and artistic operators and the local **youth**.

4. Incentives for reforms, governance, and working with civil society

Key message: The Arab Spring put governance, democratic transition and civil society support high on the EU agenda, but the EU response, based on wrong premises, largely failed to deliver. In parallel a new approach to civil society has been developed. This approach empowers the EU to work with local, national, regional non-state actors in a more sophisticated and flexible manner (empowering civil society to interact with authorities), to invest in better knowledge, and promote more coordination with Member States. All these benefits can be reaped provided the EU has leadership and political capacity and Member States are on board.

Supporting political reforms, good governance and democratic transition in the Southern Neighbourhood has been high on the EU agenda since the Arab Spring. The policy was built on the wrong premises and largely

⁴⁴ Helly, D. 2012. More Cultural Europe in the World More Europe research paper, November 2012.
⁴⁵ See [Istikshaf Mobility Policy Agenda 2012-2015](#).

failed to deliver the promised reforms.⁴⁶ Indeed space for dissenting voices is closing in some countries of the region such as Egypt.⁴⁷

The 2011 Arab Spring pushed also the EU to rethink its approach to civil society in the North Africa and Middle East and to considerably step up its support. EU communications have promoted a more strategic approach, accompanied by new instruments, initiatives and facilities and increased funding. However bigger questions of engaging with the youth, religious movements, tribal groups, traditional leaders, and the non-organised grassroots activists that made the revolutions were largely left aside.⁴⁸

Support to civil society's role in the Arab world has often been seen through the prism of democracy and human rights promotion and protection. European agencies also addressed the optimism and momentum of the uprisings and the ensuing boom in new CSOs with the traditional tools of development cooperation and typical funding streams for civil society organisations. Working with civil society in a larger sense – and beyond explicit governance objectives sometimes seen as imports from Europe – has however the potential to push reforms and change governance systems in many sectors, ranging from education to labour policies, local economic development and employment creation. Solving problems such as youth unemployment in an inclusive and collective manner is key to promote sustainable development solutions and governance reforms.

Nonetheless, associations, movements, trade unions, and other actors need to be empowered to contribute to local and national policy and decision-making. Recent initiatives like the civil society roadmaps - an outcome of the 2012 Communication "*The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations*" - can help the EU and its delegations to effectively support and cooperate with these actors. The new approach allows the EU to work with civil society in a more sophisticated and flexible manner (empowering civil society to interact with authorities), to invest in better knowledge, and promote more coordination with Member States. All these benefits can be reaped provided the EU has leadership and political capacity and Member States are on board.

5. EU tools and working ways

Key message: structural challenges impede the EU external action and development policy in the Neighbourhood. Some solutions to enhance the flexibility of EU financial instruments are being experimented but other improvements – for instance becoming a “learning” organization – will require longer-term changes. Coordination with Member States needs to become more systematic, but the bigger question is that EU and MS have sent mixed messages due to different priorities. In a context marked by the increasing presence of other powers, **EU and MS efforts need to converge.**

The involvement of **Member States** in the ENP has been limited according to experts and they should be engaged more systematically.⁴⁹ Coordination and coherence can be improved, building on initiatives already started like: the “comprehensive approach” communication and action plan⁵⁰; joint programming of development cooperation⁵¹; the AMICI initiative⁵². Some of the North African countries are not traditional

⁴⁶ Lehne. S. 2014. [Time to Reset the European Neighborhood Policy](#). Carnegie.

⁴⁷ Carothers, T & Brechenmacher, S. 2014. [The closing space: democracy support under fire](#). Carnegie and Tubiana, M. 2014. [EU and Egypt: neighbourhood policy in coma](#). Euobserver.

⁴⁸ For more details see Behr T. & Siitonen A. 2012. Building bridges or digging trenches? Civil society engagement after the Arab Spring. FIIA.

⁴⁹ [Lehne S. 2014. Time to reset the ENP. Carnegie Europe.](#)

⁵⁰ For more information on the comprehensive approach see Hauck, V., Rocca, C. 2014. Gaps between Comprehensive Approaches of the EU and EU Member States: Scoping study. (presented at a workshop on the Comprehensive Approach, Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, The Hague, 12 December 2014). Maastricht: ECDPM.

⁵¹ For more information on joint programming see Galeazzi, G., Helly, D., and Krätke, F. 2013. All for one or free-for-all? Early experiences in EU joint programming (ECDPM Briefing Note 50).

development aid recipients but the Arab spring has led to increased flows of financial assistance⁵³. In a context marked by low capacities of authorities and civil society the need for EU aid to respect the principles of coherence, coordination and complementarity is even more pressing.

A bigger question is whether the EU is **acting in a united manner** and communicating with a single voice or rather sending multiple messages. Examples of different approaches are abundant and range from human rights and rule of law in the MENA region, to the use of force in crisis like the Syrian and Libyan ones, and relations with the Palestinian authorities.⁵⁴ Technical solutions can help but will not be the definitive answer the question of coherence in EU external action. The question of bilateral interests of Member States – some with an old and controversial colonial legacy - in the region is not new.⁵⁵ In a context marked by the emergence of powers like China, Turkey, and the Gulf countries in the region,⁵⁶ **EU efforts should converge** rather than undermine each other.

In terms of **flexible** instruments some changes have already occurred in the **cultural** area, following the recommendations of the [Preparatory Action for Culture in EU External Relations](#). For instance DG NEAR (formerly DG DEVCO) has pioneered an initiative to provide micro-grants to cultural and creative actors, via “umbrella organisations” tasked with re-granting EU funds. Furthermore, several voices from the civil society but also from the European Parliament have called for a rapid response mechanism to protect cultural heritage and engage cultural professionals in crisis and conflict settings.⁵⁷

Lastly, **structural** challenges inside the EU “machine” have reduced the effectiveness of the EU’s external action and development policy – including in the Mediterranean. Changes in attitude and working ways are required⁵⁸ – some have been already put in practice by the new leadership such as the reactivation of the engagement of the High Representative in the RELEX group of commissioners. Others – for instance transforming the EU services in a **learning** organization⁵⁹ – will probably required a longer-term perspective.

Since the establishment of the EEAS – which started to function as the Arab revolutions unfolded – the capacities of the service and of the EU delegations have increased but more can be done to equip them with the right skills,⁶⁰ even in an age of budgetary constraints.⁶¹ Evaluations have shown the importance of a sound understanding and knowledge of the **context** in which the EU operates – in particular in conflict areas.⁶² Enhancing these capacities and empowering the EU delegations and staff to fully use this knowledge is needed.⁶³

⁵² For more information on the Southern Mediterranean Investment Coordination Initiative (AMICI) see [European Neighbourhood Info Centre](#).

⁵³ See [OECD's aid statistics](#) for 2012.

⁵⁴ For an overview of “unity” in the EU foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa see [ECFR's 2015 Scorecard](#).

⁵⁵ Dennison, S. & Dworkin, A. 2011. [Europe and the Arab revolutions: a new vision for democracy and human rights](#). ECFR Brief.

⁵⁶ See Liu, T. 2014. [China's economic engagement in the Middle East and North Africa](#). FRIDE Policy Brief and Ulrichsen, K.C. 2013. [The Gulf Goes Global](#). FRIDE Policy Brief.

⁵⁷ See report of the [Joint Meeting of the EP AFET and Culture & Education committees on March 23, 2015](#).

⁵⁸ ETTG. 2014. Our collective interest: Why Europe’s problems need global solutions and global problems need European action. London: European Think Tanks Group.

⁵⁹ Bossuyt, J., Shaxson, L., Datta, A. 2014. [Assessing the uptake of strategic evaluations in EU development cooperation: Study on the uptake of learning from EuropeAid's strategic evaluations into development policy and practice](#). Brussels: EuropeAid.

⁶⁰ Helly, D., Herrero, A., Knoll, A., Galeazzi, G., Sherriff, A. 2014. [A closer look into EU's external action frontline: Framing the challenges ahead for EU Delegations \(ECDPM Briefing Note 62\)](#). Maastricht: ECDPM.

⁶¹ Herrero, A. & Galeazzi, G. 2015. [Doing More with Less – Where EU Ambition Meets Sobering Reality](#). ECDPM Talking Points Blog.

⁶² The EU has been developing tools and methodologies to carry out analysis. For instance a context analysis guidance for DG DEVCO has been developed in 2014, while the EEAS/DEVCO developed and promotes the use of a conflict analysis tool.

⁶³ ADE with ECDPM. 2011. Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace-building.