



**Comments and proposals of the Euro-Mediterranean Network of Social Economy (ESMED) to the consultation "Towards a new European neighbourhood policy"  
JOIN (2015) 6 final**

**1. Introduction**

The ESMED Network is the institutional platform of social economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The members of this platform are the main representative organisations of social economy in nine countries from both shores of the Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, France, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey). These organizations represent more than 918,000 entities and enterprises that employ 8 800 000 people and associate more than 147 million people.

Social Economy is present in all the countries of the Union for the Mediterranean. These enterprises and entities come in all sizes, from micro-enterprises to large industry leaders, working in all economic sectors according to the following principles and values:

- The primacy of the individual and the social objective over capital
- Voluntary and open membership
- Democratic spirit of organisation
- The combination of the interests of members/users and/or the general interest
- The defence and application of the principle of solidarity and responsibility
- Autonomous management and independence from public authorities
- The essential surpluses is used to carry out sustainable development objectives, services of interest to members or of general interest.

**COOPERATIVES, MUTUAL SOCIETIES, DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATION, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE and OTHER INSTITUTIONS** are examples of this form of enterprise, sharing these values and carrying out an economic activity.

**2. Comments and proposals of the ESMED network about a new European neighbourhood policy.**

The ESMED Network also considers that it is necessary to revise the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) to adapt it to the new political, economic and social context in the Euro-Mediterranean region. In this regard and taking into account the questions posed in the consultation document, ESMED Network exposes below its comments and proposals:

- **Relations of the European Union with the Southern Mediterranean countries.**  
**The ESMED Network considers very relevant to maintain the ENP** according to the following considerations:
  - the ENP should serve to strengthen a framework for regional cooperation in the Mediterranean led to build a partnership between neighbouring countries

on the southern shore of the Mediterranean and the European Union, to achieve shared development objectives and to improve the living conditions of all inhabitants in the region.

- on the basis of regional cooperation under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the ENP should encourage the dialogue and the cooperation between the Southern Mediterranean countries with the European Union and Member States, in order to implement the initiatives of common interest and always in accordance with the development priorities of Southern countries.

- **Tools for greater political cooperation:**

The ENP should be used to increase trade relations and must especially promote and encourage partnerships in other socio-economic sectors related to the development of the partner Mediterranean countries in order to implement EU initiatives in favour of job creation, promotion of entrepreneurship among women and young people, access to social services in health and welfare sectors, rural and territorial development and strengthening social economy enterprises and entities.

- **Shared prosperity - social and economic development sustainable, job creation and improvement of living conditions:**

The ESMED Network proposes that the European Union, the Member States and the southern Mediterranean countries take into account to a greater extent social economy enterprises and entities in the context of bilateral cooperation EU - neighbor countries and, above all, in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

The ESMED network claims for a greater contribution of the social economy in the Euro-Mediterranean policies in line with its economic and social importance and according to the recognition of "the role that the social economy can play in fostering economic growth, eradicating poverty, building up sustainable local development, and improving labour market access and decent working conditions especially for women and young people, as well as for various categories of disadvantaged workers" as stated for instance by the Euro-Mediterranean Summit of Economic and Social Councils and similar Institutions held in Nicosia November 2014.

Moreover, the European Commission considers that "Cooperatives, social enterprises and other forms of people-centred business are often leading the way in providing decent jobs, sustainable livelihoods and inclusive solutions to social problems"<sup>1</sup>.

- **Regional cooperation:**

The ESMED Network aims to strengthen the links of the ENP with a regional policy at Euro-Mediterranean level, given that the South and the North of the Mediterranean share economic, social, cultural and environmental challenges that must be jointly addressed from a common action, mutual support and solidarity.

In this regard, the ESMED Network proposes to create working tools to build greater coordination between the Union for the Mediterranean and the ENP in order to

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<sup>1</sup> Communication "A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries". 2014

increase the impact of UfM's projects and initiatives to the priorities and objectives defined under the ENP between the southern Mediterranean countries and the European Union in the framework of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

- **Civil society:**

It is necessary to ensure the participation of the representative organisations of social economy, in particular those from the southern Mediterranean countries, in the design and monitoring of the agreements of the ENP, in order to validate that the interests of the social economy are taken into account and also that social economy contribute to socio-economic development goals of the ENP.

Therefore, the ESMED Network proposes to the European Commission to develop general recommendations to ensure the participation of the social economy organisations and other civil society actors in the preparation and follow-up of Action Plans and Programmes of Association under ENP.

- **Thematic orientations:**

The ESMED Network considers that the thematic priorities suggested in the consultation document are appropriate to concentrate the various bilateral agreements to be established in the framework of the ENP. However, the ESMED network proposes:

- To assure a wide margin of manoeuvre for the southern Mediterranean countries so that they can identify other priorities related to social cohesion, sustainable & economic development, youth or gender equality, governance and migration policies.
- To keep on deepening the link between the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the ENP in order to act jointly in the implementation of actions in favour of population in the region, in particular from southern Mediterranean countries.

- **Last comments:**

Finally, the ESMED Network considers necessary to improve the conditions of sustainable socio-economic development in the Mediterranean in order to achieve the main objective of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as it is to build a zone of shared prosperity between the North and the South, being the social economy a key player who helps find solutions to social and territorial imbalances between both shores.

Social economy organizations are people centered enterprises. Therefore social economy organizations allow the creation of localized enterprises, managed by local people that through effective projects and results contribute to the consolidation and empowerment of a middle class in many countries of both shores.