

WHAT ROLE FOR THE REVIEWED ENP IN THE BROADER EU EXTERNAL ACTION?

ALEKSANDRA CHMIELEWSKA

Project Manager, European Institute of the Mediterranean

FRANCESCA FABBRI

Research Assistant, European Institute of the Mediterranean

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), created in 2004, has been struggling to be an effective foreign policy instrument and to fulfil the – ambitious – objective to create an “area of prosperity and stability”. As a consequence, it has undergone several reviews following the past years’ geopolitical turmoil in the EU’s neighbouring regions and especially in the Mediterranean.

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The purpose of the ENP review process, launched in April 2015, was to adapt the framework to the changes that have occurred in the Southern Neighbourhood since 2011, enabling it to better respond to the ongoing developments. In the Joint Press Conference by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn, announcing the launching of the consultation process on the ENP review, it has been stated that the revised framework would aim at converting the current relations with partner countries into more political ones. The objective of the renewed Policy would also be to increase the EU influence in the region and make it a key partner for the neighbouring countries.¹

The aim of this article is to analyse whether the revised ENP is sufficiently ambitious to respond to the challenges posed by the region and contribute to the achievement of the EU foreign and political priorities and interests. The article will focus on questions 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the Euromed Survey, related to the strategic aspects of the ENP, including its integration into the CFSP/CSDP, its geographical scope and the redefinition of the current ways of cooperation. The first part will analyse the stance of the Survey’s respondents on making the ENP more strategic and political. The article will then contrast the Survey results with the outcome of the Joint Communication “Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy” released on the 18 November. It will examine whether and to what extent the revised ENP is more strategic and coherent with the security and foreign policy dimensions of the EU’s interactions with its neighbourhood. Finally, some proposals will follow on what further strategy should be adapted to adequately and efficiently address manifold challenges in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

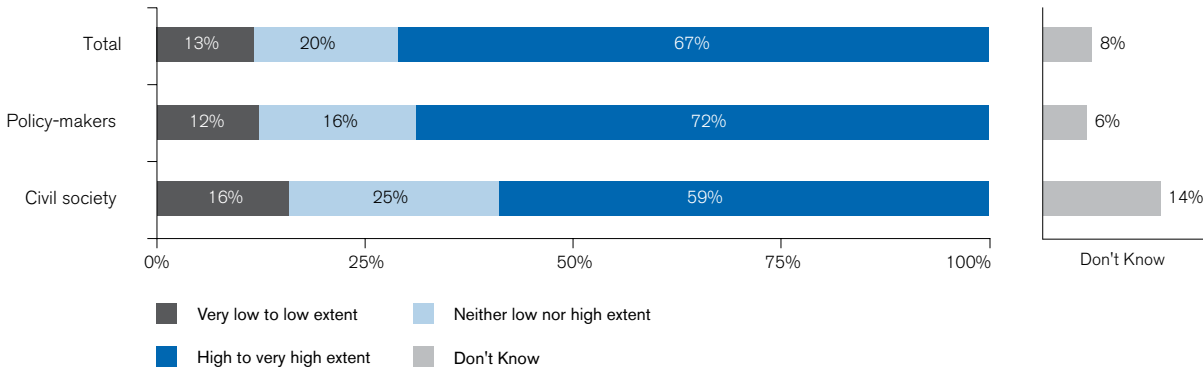
ENP as a Strategic Tool: From Expectations...

According to the results of the 6th Euromed Survey, the vast majority of respondents would prefer the reviewed ENP to be better integrated in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (see graph 1). This support might result from the conviction that enhanced coordination with those policies would increase the

1. Joint Press Conference by HR/VR Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn on European Neighbourhood Policy Review. 4 March 2015. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4553_en.htm

leverage of the ENP. Interestingly, the level of support for ensuring a better coherence of the ENP with the foreign and security policy dimensions of the EU's external actions varies according to the different groups of respondents. While 73% of policy-makers advocate enhanced integration of the ENP to the CFSP and the CSDP, this idea receives support from less than 60% of civil society respondents. This difference might result from the fact that most civil society operators and organisations fear that an enhanced security dimension of the ENP would entail the risk of diluting the human rights dimension of the ENP.

Graph 1: To what extent should the ENP be better integrated in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 6th Euromed Survey/Question 9

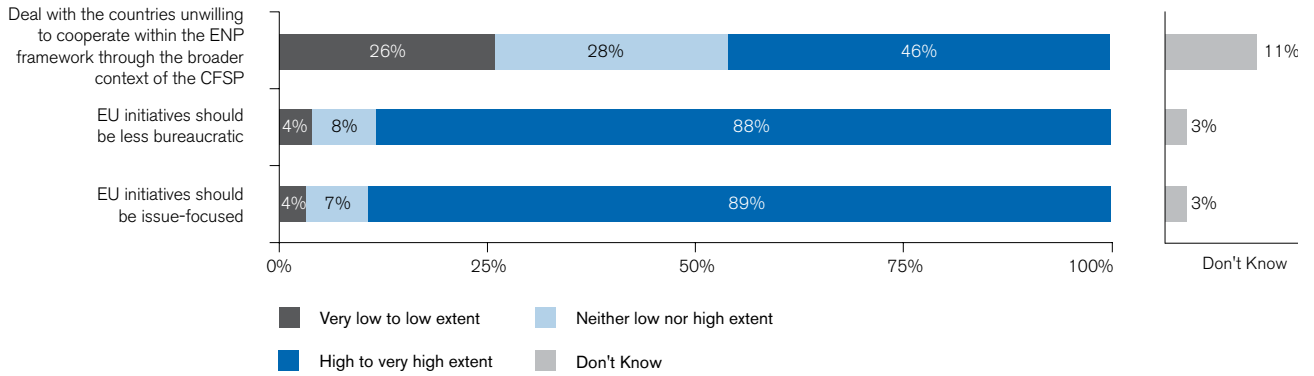
Taking into account the proposals to redefine the neighbourhood, almost half of the respondents think that those countries unwilling to cooperate within the ENP framework should be dealt with in the broader context of the CFSP. This is extremely important if we consider that currently, out of 16 countries included in the ENP, only 5 of them – Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Morocco and Tunisia – are willing to pursue deeper relations with the EU. The rest of the countries, both from the Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood, seem not to perceive the ENP to be the most attractive framework of cooperation. This perception is influenced by various factors. On the one hand, for some partner countries the costs of conditionality largely exceed the benefits offered under the ENP. Moreover, many Southern Neighbourhood partner countries receive unconditional economic and political support from other international and regional actors, pursuing their quest for influence. On the other hand, some partner countries prefer not to fully engage in the ENP in order to maintain their bargaining position with the EU and other regional and international actors. Therefore, the fact that so few countries are committed to cooperate within the ENP framework is an argument in favour of linking the ENP closer to the CFSP/CSDP.

A large majority of respondents consider that the EU initiatives should be less bureaucratic (88%) and more issue-focused (92%) (see graph 2). Since its creation, the ENP, conceived by the European Commission, has been widely criticised for its bureaucratic and technocratic approach, aiming to reproduce the success of the enlargement in a completely different political and security context. For this reason, the programmes and areas for cooperation set-up have been often said to be detached from the regional political reality. Also, the wide scope of the ENP, designed in this fashion in order to safeguard the different interests of the EU Member States, prevented it from addressing specific needs of the partner countries. Better coordination of the ENP actions and initiatives with the EU's foreign policy priorities would make the policy more streamlined, strategic and coherent.

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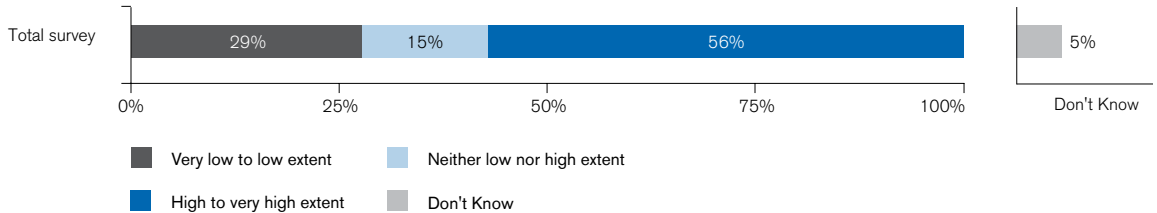
Graph 2: To what extent do you agree with the following proposals to redefine the neighbourhood?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 6th Euromed Survey/Question 12

An aspect that also plays a central role in the redefinition of the ENP and that is relevant to CFSP and CDSP matters is its geographical scope.² It has been widely noted that the challenges faced by the Middle East and North Africa region largely exceed the current geographical framework of the ENP.³ Many observed that the developments in Syria cannot be solved without designing a comprehensive strategy towards Iraq. Likewise, the security challenges in Maghreb countries cannot be addressed without engaging in dialogue with Sahel countries. These views have been expressed in the Survey responses. 56% of respondents consider that the definition of neighbourhood should be extended to include other regional state actors (see graph 3). More than half of all the respondents would support the inclusion of the Gulf Cooperation Countries and Iraq.

Graph 3: To what extent do you agree that the definition of Neighbourhood should be extended in order to include other regional State actors?



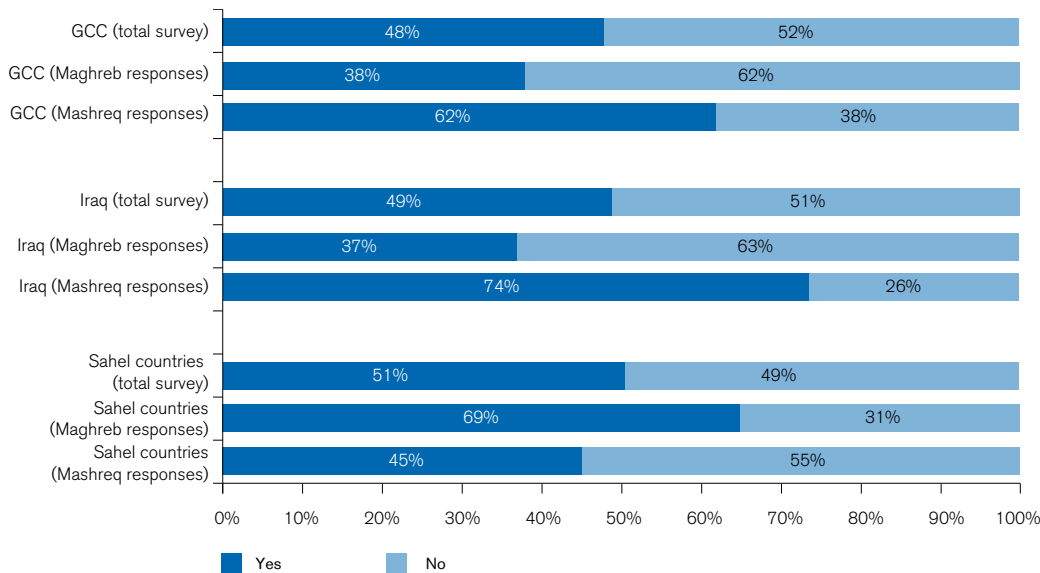
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 6th Euromed Survey/Question 10

When analysing the answers from regional groups, it can be observed that each strongly supports the extension of the ENP scope to its neighbouring region. Thus, 70% of respondents from the Maghreb are in favour of inclusion of Sahel countries, while the respondents from Mashreq consider that the extension should apply to Iraq and the Gulf Cooperation Council (74% and 63% of respondents respectively) (see graph 4). These results clearly show that regional problems demand regional solutions and a broader cooperation between countries, not limited to the arbitrary geographical framework of the ENP. Therefore, in order to be able to respond to the current challenges, the ENP would need to be better integrated into the CFSP and other areas of the EU's external policies.

2. For more details on the geographical scope of the ENP, please refer to the article by Lannon, E., "Extending the Geographical Scope of the ENP?: the Neighbours of the EU's Neighbours" in the same volume.

3. See, for example, Leigh, M. (2015). *New Policies Urgently Needed for EU Neighbourhood*. The German Marshall Fund, or Youngs, R., & Gutman J.P. (2015). *Is the EU Tackling the Root Causes of Middle Eastern Conflict*. Carnegie Europe.

Graph 4: In case you think that the geographical scope of the ENP should be extended, which of the following should be included?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 6th Euromed Survey/Question 11

To Reality: A Pragmatic Framework Acting Strategically in a Fluid Environment or the Usual Approach in Facing New Challenges

Following a public consultation, to which the IEMed has also contributed,⁴ the EEAS and the European Commission released on the 18 of November a Joint Communication, “Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy”,⁵ establishing “a new approach, a re-prioritisation and an introduction of new ways of working” to the ENP. The document is also accompanied by a Joint Staff Working Document explaining how the consultation has been conducted and describing what has been suggested by governments, international organisations, think tanks, civil society, academia and other stakeholders. Coupling these two documents and the results of the IEMed Survey, as well as some contributions and reactions to the Joint Communication, it clearly emerges that the reviewed ENP will be more low-key and pragmatic than expected, especially in what concerns its link to the broader European external policies. In fact, the Joint Communication recognises the failure of the ENP in achieving its purpose to establish “an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation,” but it falls below expectations in providing a fully-fledged strategic revision and an ambitious strategy for the region.

The Joint Communication falls below expectations in providing a fully-fledged strategic revision and an ambitious strategy for the region.

Question 9 of the Survey shows well the dichotomy between what has been answered by experts and actors and the actual reviewed ENP. Although mainly programmatic, and thus not conclusive, the Joint Communication does not concretely envisage further integration of the ENP in the overall EU foreign dimension, in particular in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In the document it is stated that the review “is being closely coordinated as part of the broader work on the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy,” but it is not specified how, also taking into

4. Aragall, X., Chmielewska, A., Fabbri, F. & Florensa, S. (2015). *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy*. European Institute of the Mediterranean.

5. European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication JOIN(2015) 50 final, Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, 18 November, 2015.

account that the reviewed ENP has been published several months before the EU Global Strategy is released.⁶ For the moment, the ENP is defined as a partnership framework, part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards the stabilisation of the neighbourhood, but there is no reference to a much needed regional strategy based on a tangible coordination among services of the EU and with the EU Member States, integrating the ENP in the CFSP and CSDP. Moreover, just 5 ENP partner countries – Morocco, Tunisia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – are indicated as partners wishing to pursue deeper relations with the EU and thus leaving to the other ENP countries a more ad-hoc cooperation whose methodology still needs to be clarified. Therefore, it is not clear how this framework would enable better integration with the EU's overall foreign policy. The Joint Communication envisages areas where CSDP and CFSP activities can support the ENP because of the current situation and security concerns in the region, allowing a more flexible programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) and other financial instruments. This is a fairly positive factor as, while an overall new vision has still not been devised, it underlines that the ENP could make itself useful through its renewed pragmatic approach.

To tackle the manifold challenges the Southern Neighbourhood poses to the region, the ENP would either need to be part of an overarching political and security regional strategy or/and to be more ambitious.

Also, the Joint Communication does not present substantial geographical adjustments to the ENP. As has also been noted by the experts and actors of the Survey in questions 10, 11, 12 and 13, a partial rethinking of the geographical scope of the ENP would allow the framework of the regional challenges presented by the Southern Neighbourhood to be adapted. The document recognises the wide influence of bordering countries and regions and of major regional actors, making vague reference to an eventual new outreach of existing regional frameworks, such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), creating new Thematic Frameworks involving the “neighbours of the neighbours” and indicating that the EU will pursue cooperation in other regional forums. Nonetheless, to tackle the manifold challenges the Southern Neighbourhood poses to the region, the ENP would either need to be part of an overarching political and security regional strategy or/and be more ambitious. The Joint Communication is not conclusive and envisages further inter-institutional consultation; therefore, the next months will be key for enhancing the ENP's political and strategic aspects. The reviewed ENP would then need to fulfil a broader vision through specific political objectives and should then be managed jointly by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission and in close coordination with the EU Member States, thus allowing a more strategic and coherent framework to respond to the geopolitical challenges in the Middle East and North Africa.

Conclusion

The Foreign Affairs Council of April 2015 indicated the neighbourhood as a strategic priority and that the new ENP, key for the CFSP and other areas of the EU's external action, should be streamlined with the EU's political priorities and interests and coherent with the security and foreign policy dimensions of the EU's actions abroad.⁷ In its resolution of July 2015, the European Parliament called for closer coordination between the ENP and wider CFSP and CSDP activities and stressed the need for coherence and full alignment between the review of the ENP and the revision of the EU Security Strategy.⁸ In the same line, the Joint Staff Working Document, accompanying the Joint Communication on the review of the ENP and summarising the results of the public consultation, makes reference to the contributions of some EU Member States, think tanks and academics suggesting stronger coordination between the ENP and

6. A website summarising this process has been created and can be found on the official website of the Global Strategy: <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>. Another important reference is this volume produced by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) and fully available online: Missiroli, A. (2015). *Towards an EU global strategy – Background, process, references*. EU Institute for Security Studies.

7. Outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council, 20 April 2015.

8. European Parliament resolution of 9 July 2015 on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (2015/2002(INI)).

the CFSP and CSDP. These observations are widely mirrored in the Euromed Survey answers to questions 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, emphasising once more how the Southern Neighbourhood, largely entrenched with the wider Middle East, requires a more complex political and strategic framework than the ENP is able to provide at the moment, especially taking into account that it was not aligned with the EU global strategy review process. Some of the reactions⁹ to the Joint Communication publication also highlight the risks related to a failure in merging the EU Global Strategy with the ENP review and making the ENP a more ambitious framework. It is therefore widely acknowledged that the stabilisation of the neighbourhood, and more specifically of the Middle East and North Africa, should be addressed through a specific regional framework encompassing political and security objectives and it is quite possible that this will not be found in the reviewed ENP, when it will take its final form after the next months' consultations. As a result, the EU needs to envisage new policy solutions in its Global Strategy, with a more coherent geographical scope for the Middle East and North Africa, with a multilateral approach and with more ambitious political aims. Better coordination between the EU and the Member States would allow for swifter diplomatic solutions and conflict resolution actions with a broader and more coherent perspective, keeping the inclusive criteria and other important lessons learned from the ENP.

The EU needs to envisage new policy solutions in its Global Strategy, with a more coherent geographical scope, with a multilateral approach and with more ambitious political aims.

Aleksandra Chmielewska is a Project Manager at the European Institute of the Mediterranean. She joined the IEMed as a fellowship holder. Prior to that, she was a trainee at the Permanent Representation of Poland to the Council of Europe and at the Polish Ministry of Regional Development. She holds a BA in Linguistic and Cultural Studies from Warsaw University (2011) and a double MA degree in European Policies from Jagiellonian University and from Science Po Strasbourg (2013).

Francesca Fabbri joined the EPC as Programme Assistant in the Europe in the World Programme in January 2016. Prior to joining, she was awarded a one year fellowship at the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). She has been a Blue Book trainee at the European External Action Service (EEAS) in the Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq Division. She holds a BA in International Relations and an MA in International Cooperation with the Middle East, both from the University of Bologna and an International Exchange Certificate from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po).

9. For instance, of Rosa Balfour, Senior Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, in her blog post "Making the Most of the European Neighbourhood Policy Toolbox", and Anthony Dworkin, Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR).