

POSITION OF THE EU IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Main findings

- Most respondents consider that the EU has a high or very high influence in the MPCs as an economic and trading partner.
- The influence of the EU as a mediator and peace broker is assessed as low or very low by most respondents.
- Out of the international actors present in the region, only the USA and, to a lesser extent, the GCC are considered more influential than the EU.
- In comparison to the 2011 Survey, the importance of the role of the League of Arab States and, significantly, also of Turkey has decreased.

Most respondents consider that the EU has high or very high influence in the Southern Mediterranean region as an economic and trading partner.

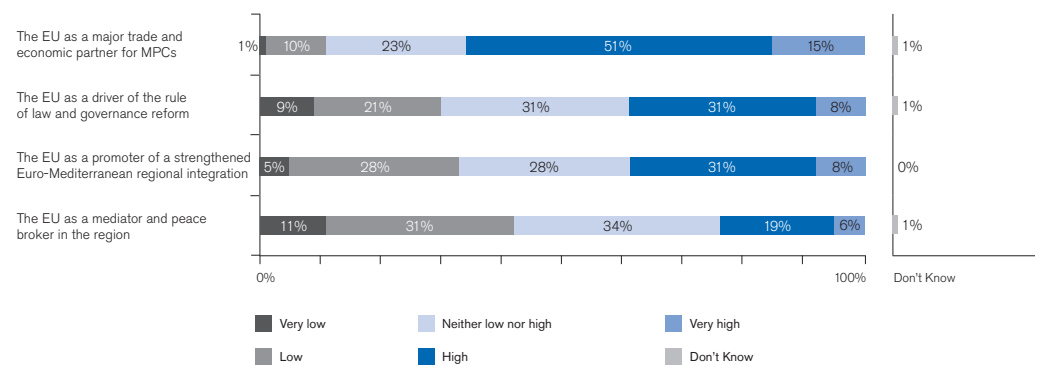
This block aims to assess the future role of the European Union regarding the development of a multipolar neighbourhood; that is, the influence that it may continue to have in Southern Mediterranean countries after the political changes that have taken place in the region.

In this respect, question C1 asks respondents to assess the EU's degree of influence in the Mediterranean area in four fields. Out of the four options suggested, most respondents consider that the EU has a high or very high influence in the MPCs as an economic and trading partner.

From the other options, the influence of the EU as a driver of governance reform in the MPCs is considered slightly high, while its role as a promoter of strengthened Euro-Mediterranean cooperation has very divided results between respondents who believe that the EU has a high or very high influence, those who consider that it is neither high nor low, and those who think that it is low or very low.

Finally, the assessment of the EU's influence as a mediator and peace broker reveals that most respondents (42%) consider it low or very low.

Graph 29.1: Influence of the European Union in the present framework of a multipolar scenario



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 5th Euromed Survey

Analysing the options individually, we note that, for the assessment of the EU as a promoter of strengthened Euro-Mediterranean integration, the results by origin of respondents are very similar to the overall results with the exception of Maghreb respondents, who believe it is less influential, while those from the Mashreq consider its influence is higher than respondents as a whole (see Block 2, Annex IV). Moreover, it should be emphasised that the results by type of institution of the respondents show that most policy-makers think that the EU's influence is high, far above experts or civil society members (51%, 32% and 36%, respectively).

The EU role as a promoter of strengthened Euro-Mediterranean integration is assessed much more positively by policy-makers than by experts of civil society members.

The US and the UN are unsuccessful in promoting peace in the region, and in helping individual countries to establish the rule of law in the political system. On the contrary, support for Islamists (for the sake of democracy) in a country's representation has made things worse over the last two years. If not the US and the UN, then the EU's chance to bring peace to the region is limited. However, the EU can benefit from the mediating and moderating effects of commercial and economic activities, as long as Southern Mediterranean countries prepare for EU investment. Also, the EU may transfer its experience of democratic institutions and civil society to help these countries establish and develop good governance.

Turkish respondent

The EU is attempting to promote democracy in the Mediterranean through more aid, mobility and economic cooperation by investing in cooperation, the setting up of new institutions, and socialisation of good practices. But this cannot easily transform into a politically influential role in the region since the EU has too many internal views.

Italian respondent

In terms of the EU's influence as an economic and trading partner taking into account that the assessment from all the geographic areas is high, we do see small differences according to origin of respondents. Thus, EU respondents assess the EU's influence more highly in comparison to those from the MPCs, who consider its influence is slightly lower in this field (especially those from the Maghreb).

The EU's influence as a mediator and peace broker in the region is seen by respondents as the lowest of the four options. This trend is reflected in the results by respondents' areas of origin, always above 40% for those who believe that the influence is low or very low. One outstanding aspect of these results is the high percentage of Mashreq respondents who consider it very high. Moreover, in the results by type of institution, the group of experts provide the most negative assessment.

The EU's influence as a mediator and peace broker in the Southern Mediterranean region is considered to be the lowest.

The EU will continue to be a major trading partner, but regional integration depends largely on the southern countries themselves. Hopefully, the UfM projects will materialize, and in this case they may trigger better regional coordination. As mediator in regional conflicts, the EU's record is not good. Hopefully, the EU will draw lessons from the past decades in which it entertained cosy relations with authoritarian regimes and never used democratic conditionality.

Belgian respondent

The EU's role is viewed as moral and economic, rather than political.

Lebanese respondent

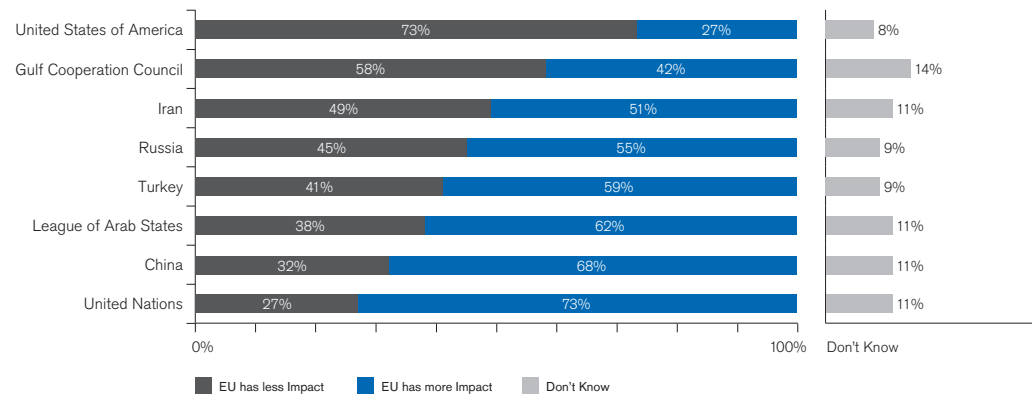
Finally, the assessment of the EU as a driver of the rule of law and governance reform, which is slightly high, is maintained in the distribution by areas. It is worth pointing out that the results of Israel are the lowest (almost 20% considers the EU's influence as "very low") or that among the types of institutions, policy-makers (50% of respondents) assess it between high and very high.

Question C2 asks respondents to assess the role of the EU in the MPCs in comparison with the role of other international actors. Out of the different actors suggested, only two are considered to have more impact in the region than the EU. On the one hand, the USA, which 73% of respondents believe to have more impact than the EU, and, on the other, the GCC, which most consider to be more influential although to a far lesser extent than the USA (58%).

According to the respondents, only two actors, USA and GCC, will play a more important role in the region in the future than the EU.

For Iran, respondents express a completely divided opinion, as half consider it to have a greater impact than the EU and the other half believe the opposite. For the remaining actors, most respondents believe that the EU has more impact in the region. Sometimes with a very small majority, as in the cases of Russia and Turkey, in others slightly greater, such as the League of Arab States, or others where it is very significant, such as China or the UN.

Graph 29.2: Assessing the EU's future role in MPCs compared to other regional and international actors (the graph below displays the EU's relative capacity to influence regional developments compared to other actors)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 5th Euromed Survey

When the results are analysed according to whether respondents are from the EU or the MPCs, we find few differences but some of them are highly significant. MPC respondents make an assessment very similar to overall assessments of the impact of the USA, Iran, China, Turkey or the UN. However, they tend to assess Arab actors more negatively than the general assessment.

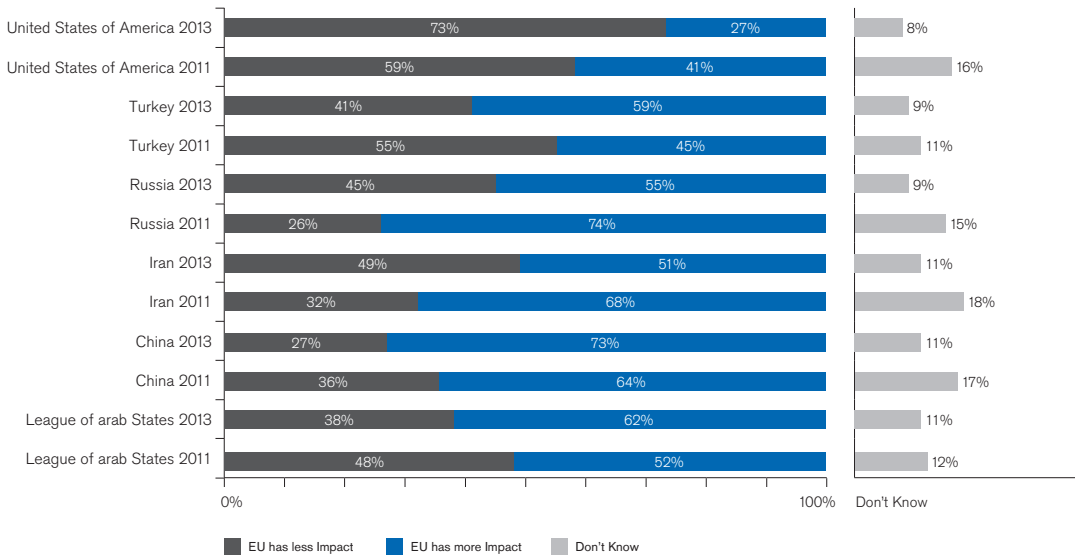
On the GCC, respondents are divided equally in relation to greater or lesser impact than the EU, while in terms of the League of Arab States the percentage that believes that it has less influence than the EU is even higher than the whole of respondents. Moreover, the percentage of MPC respondents who consider that Russia is more influential in the region than the EU is higher, reaching 50%. Similarly, EU respondents contrast with those from the MPCs: the number of those who positively assess the influence of Russia compared to the EU is lower and there are more who believe that the League of Arab States and the GCC are more influential than the EU (in the case of the League of Arab States, no more than 50% but in that of the GCC it reaches a notable 66%).

Finally, we analyse the results of this question in comparison to those of a similar question included in the 2011 Survey (see graph 29_3). This comparison shows how according to respondents there are actors who have lost influence with respect to the EU while some others have increased it. Among the first we find the League of Arab States and Turkey (the latter case is significant as in 2011 most respondents considered its impact in the MPCs to be higher than that of the EU, while in 2013 the highest percentage is the opposite).

In comparison with the results of 2011 Survey, the League of Arab States and Turkey have significantly lost their influence with respect to the EU.

Moreover, actors such as Iran and Russia have seen how the percentage of respondents that considers that their impact is greater than that of the EU has increased, approaching 50%. A case apart is that of the USA, which, although it already achieved the percentage of respondents who consider that it is more influential than the EU, in the 2013 Survey this percentage has increased even more (from 59% to 73%).

Graph 29.3: Assessing the EU's future role in MPCs compared to other regional and international actors. Comparing 2011 and 2013 survey results. (The graph below displays the EU's relative capacity to influence regional developments compared to other actors).



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 3rd and 5th Euromed Survey