

CONFRONTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The third block of this Survey aimed to capture respondents' assessments on various aspects related to the policy response to violent extremism. Questions 12 and 13 are rather general. Question 12 provides interesting insights on how respondents assess the overall efforts of confronting violent extremism in their respective countries. Question 13 aims at identifying what the main priority actions are in the eyes of respondents in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Question 14 is geared towards the multilateral initiatives taken to confront violent extremism while Question 15 has a more regional scope as it relates to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and Questions 16 to 18 are centred on the European Union more specifically.

Main findings

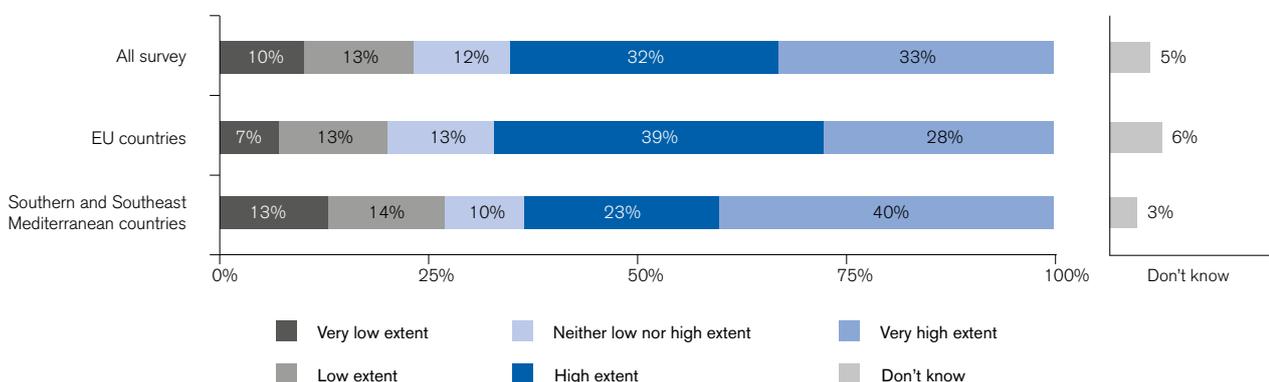
- A majority of respondents (65%) are of the opinion that efforts undertaken in their respective countries to counter violent extremism have been effective to a high extent or to a very high extent. Respondents from Algeria and Morocco assess the efforts of their respective countries as highly or very highly effective in bigger proportions than Tunisian and Egyptian respondents. Within the EU, respondents from Spain or Italy tend to rate the efforts of their countries slightly more positively than respondents from countries like France, Germany or Belgium.
- As a matter of priority, respondents think that so-called root causes should be addressed in the Euro-Mediterranean region, including socioeconomic ones. Security-oriented measures are not seen as the main priorities by respondents.
- Multilateral frameworks in particular could contribute to addressing these root causes (focus on the development agenda rather than focus on the security/counter-terrorism agenda). Respondents stressed the importance of communities, civil society and local actors as stakeholders in the fight against violent extremism. Indeed, promoting and funding projects targeting these categories is the recurrent choice of respondents when asked about what multilateral initiatives should be focusing on.
- Respondents unambiguously highlight the need for more regional Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on preventing and countering violent extremism, acknowledge that there is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries, and think that cooperation in this field should not remain only bilateral nor focus only on the security angle.
- A critical majority of respondents thinks that Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation fora to address violent extremism and exchange best practices are missing and a majority thinks that the Union for the Mediterranean could play a role in this regard.
- As far as the EU itself is concerned, scaling up security-focused measures within the European Union is not seen as a matter of priority. On the external front, respondents also agree that "Supporting good governance in non-EU countries in order to address underlying factors of radicalisation" is more of a priority than "Contributing to strengthening security capacities of non-EU countries".
- There is a perception gap regarding the importance of countering discrimination in the European Union as a matter of priority. 34% of respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries have ranked "Countering discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, race or ethnic origin" as a number one priority, while 16% of European respondents did so.

- “Contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism” is ranked first by EU respondents.
- Respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries consistently rate the effectiveness of EU frameworks in higher proportions than their European counterparts. Targeted mechanisms such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Office or the cooperation with IT (Information Technology) and social media are seen as more effective than broad policy frameworks such as the European Neighbourhood Policy.
- The fight against terrorist financing is seen as an important strand while the reinforced checks introduced in the Schengen context are assessed as least relevant when it comes to counter-terrorism purposes.

RESPONDENTS ASSESS THE EFFORTS TO CONFRONT VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES

With **Question 12**, respondents were invited to assess how effective the efforts deployed to confront violent extremism have been in their respective countries. Overall, a majority of respondents (65%) acknowledge that efforts have been effective to a high extent or to a very high extent. Slightly more EU respondents (69%) than respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries (63%) have responded that way. However, views seem to be more polarised in Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries than in EU countries. In the former, 40% of respondents indicated that the efforts undertaken in their respective countries had been effective to a very high extent and 28% of respondents from the latter category did so. Similarly, very negative judgements of the efforts undertaken are found in higher proportions among respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries (13%) than among respondents from EU countries (7%) (see Graph 30).

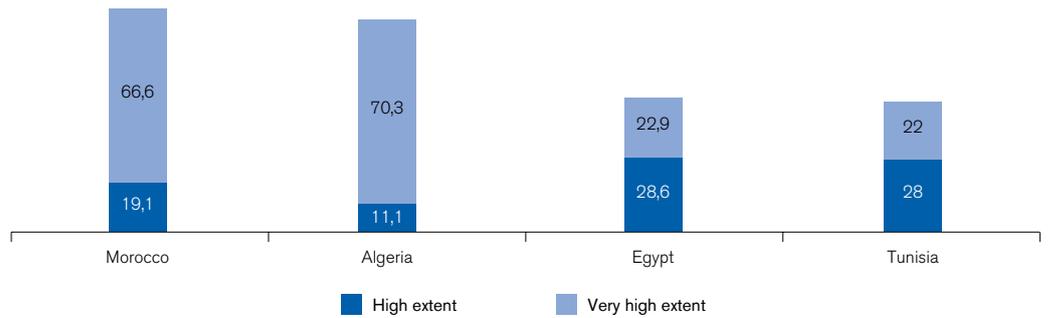
Graph 30: To what extent do you consider that the overall efforts deployed so far in confronting violent extremism in your own country are effective?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

A more detailed look into specific countries also offers interesting insights. It appears that respondents from Algeria and Morocco assess the efforts of their respective countries as highly or very highly effective in much bigger proportions than Tunisian and Egyptian respondents.

Graph 31: To what extent do you consider that the overall efforts deployed so far in confronting violent extremism in your own country are effective?
(answers in %)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

La réconciliation nationale a contribué dans une large mesure au déclin de l'extrémisme violent en Algérie. À cela s'ajoutent les efforts déployés par les services de sécurité pour empêcher le recrutement pour les groupes terroristes et le démantèlement de cellules de recrutement.

Algerian respondent

Au Maroc, la « prévention » repose sur le renseignement et la dénonciation par les familles ; il existe aussi une surveillance étroite des propos tenus par des « professionnels » de la religion dans les mosquées au nom de l'Islam.

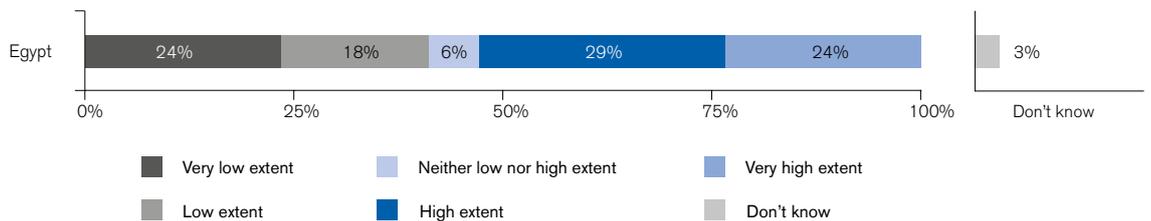
Moroccan respondent

Counter-terrorism strategies in Tunisia are not showing results so far. They focus mostly on security responses and are not comprehensive enough.

Tunisian respondent

Egyptian respondents are among the most negative ones regarding the efforts of their country. 42% of Egyptian respondents think that the efforts are effective to a low or very low extent.

Graph 32: To what extent do you consider that the overall efforts deployed so far in confronting violent extremism in Egypt are effective?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

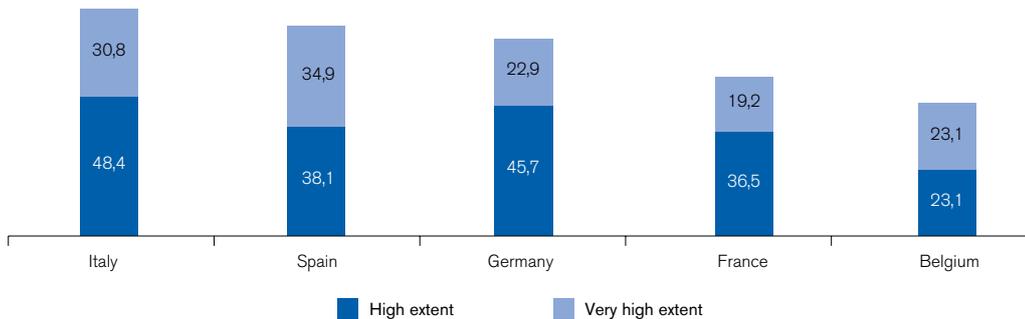
Relying mainly on repression is not likely to be effective. Some use of force is required but it has to be embedded in an overall programme that combines social, political, financial and cultural dimensions.

Egyptian respondent

Some variations can also be observed among EU countries. For instance, respondents from Spain or Italy tend to rate the efforts of their countries slightly more positively than respondents from countries like France, Germany or Belgium (see Graph 33):

Graph 33: To what extent do you consider that the overall efforts deployed so far in confronting violent extremism in your own country are effective?

(answers in %)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

Spain has previous knowledge of terrorism on its soil. This has helped in preventing attacks. The experience should be considered.

Spanish respondent

The political response has not been very good in France. Intelligence seems to have been better organised. There is a poor understanding of terrorism because it has become part of political and electoral confrontation.

French respondent

Some open comments mention the efforts made in different countries and offer useful insights into specific initiatives:

Violent extremism – especially the right-wing or hate behaviour towards Muslims – is more relevant in the Czech Republic than extremism inspired by religions (Islam, etc.). A good initiative is the Hate Free Culture Initiative.

Czech respondent

Al-Azhar is currently responding to President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi's call for renewal of religious discourse and addressing the distorted interpretations of Islam, which terrorist groups exploit in recruiting and justifying their crimes. Al Azhar Al-Sharif has established an international Observatory to respond to lies of the extremist groups; it also trains imams and preachers.

Egyptian respondent

The Dutch government has created excellent awareness among professionals. There are multi-agency approaches and specialised programmes (family- and exit support) in place.

Dutch respondent

Numéro vert de signalement des personnes en voie de radicalisation géré par l'UCLAT.

French respondent

Through the organisation I Dare, we are already working on the issue of violent extremism through prevention and for that we are seeking behavioural change goals (positive community change behaviour).

Jordanian respondent

Satisfying religious need of communities through a formal education system such as the Turkish IMAMHATIP school is an interesting case for other Islamic countries.

Turkish respondent

Other comments are more critical:

Que ce soit en France ou en Belgique, la coopération entre les différents services de police fut défailante, la première chose à faire est de mettre en place une plateforme pour gérer une meilleure collaboration.

Belgian respondent

Grassroots initiatives/community level engagement (and community-police engagement) are fairly effective. The overall contest strategy of the UK Government is ineffective.

UK respondent

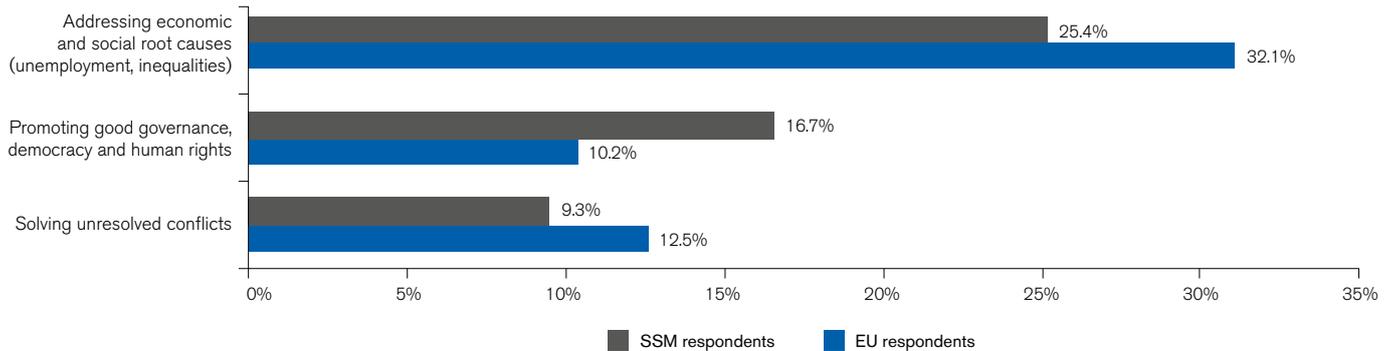
WHAT PRIORITIES TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION?

Moving away from the perception of the efforts undertaken in specific countries, **Question 13** looks into the perception of what should be done as a matter of priority in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Respondents were asked to choose and rank three of the 14 priorities proposed. No apparent typology of these priorities was proposed to respondents but overall one could distinguish three main categories of options: those that relate to so-called root causes (addressing economic and social root causes, promoting good governance and human rights, solving unresolved conflicts); those that relate to purely security-oriented actions (such as state of emergency, border control, etc.); and, finally, those that relate to softer measures (such as combating the spread of hate speech, engaging communities, fighting Islamophobia or proposing alternative narratives).

Among the first four priorities that respondents ranked as top priorities, three belong to the first category. In other words, it comes through quite clearly that respondents think that tackling root causes is the most effective way to counter violent extremism. More specifically, 29% of respondents ranked as number one priority “Addressing economic and social root causes” and the EU respondents did so in even higher proportions (32.1%) than respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries (25.4%). Conversely, more respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries (16.7%) mentioned the more political-related root cause priority “Promoting good governance, democracy and human rights” than EU respondents (10.2%). Last, “Solving unresolved conflicts” is the second most often ticked as a first priority by EU respondents (12.5%) and the fourth most often ticked as a first priority by respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries (9.3%) (see Graph 34).

Graph 34: What should be the main priorities in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region?

(results show the first choice out of four)

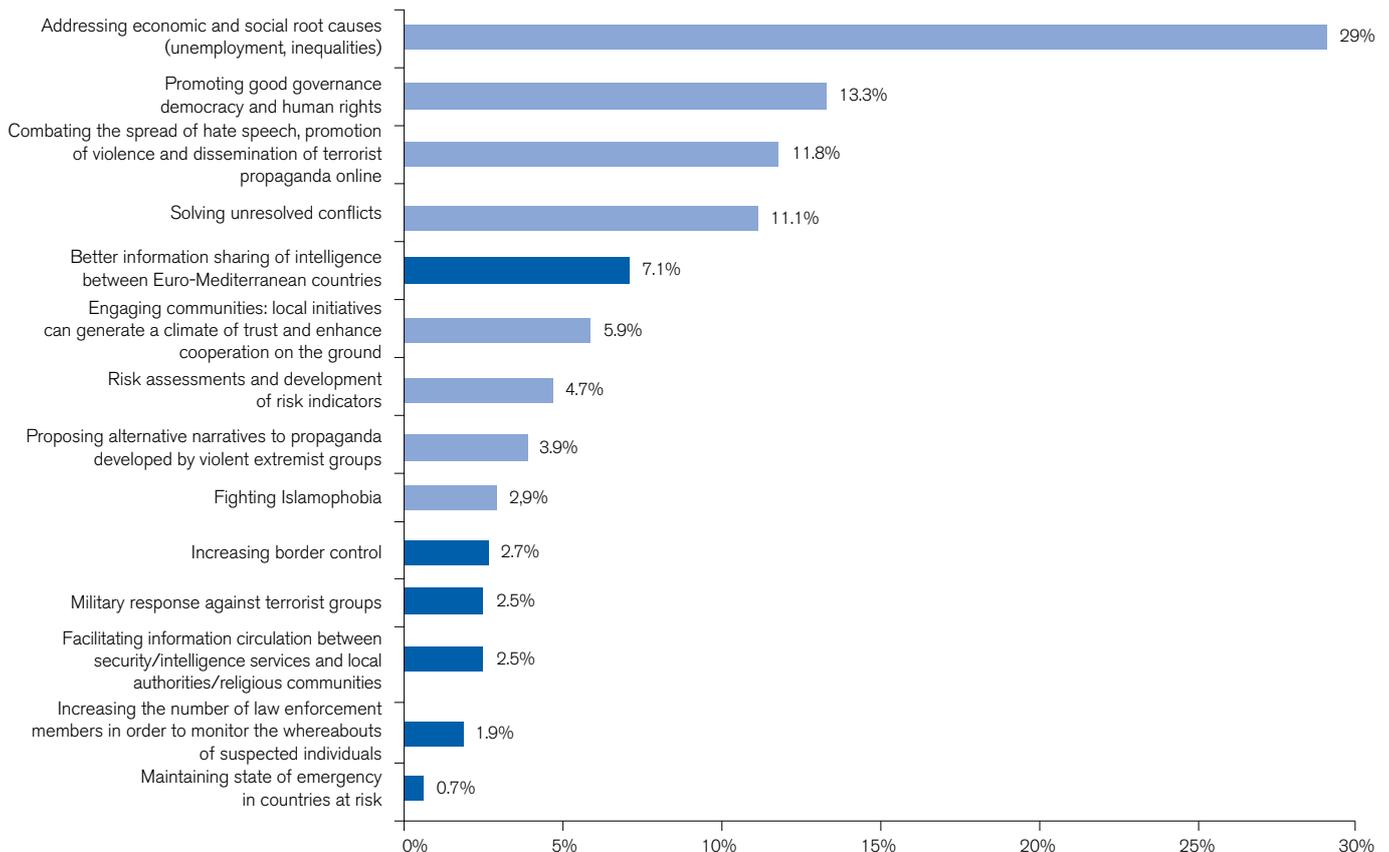


Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

Security-oriented measures (in dark blue in Graph 35) are not seen as the main priorities by respondents. The only exception seems to be “Better information sharing of intelligence between Euro-Mediterranean countries”, which has been identified as the number 1 priority in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region by 7.1% of respondents.

Graph 35: What should be the main priorities in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region?

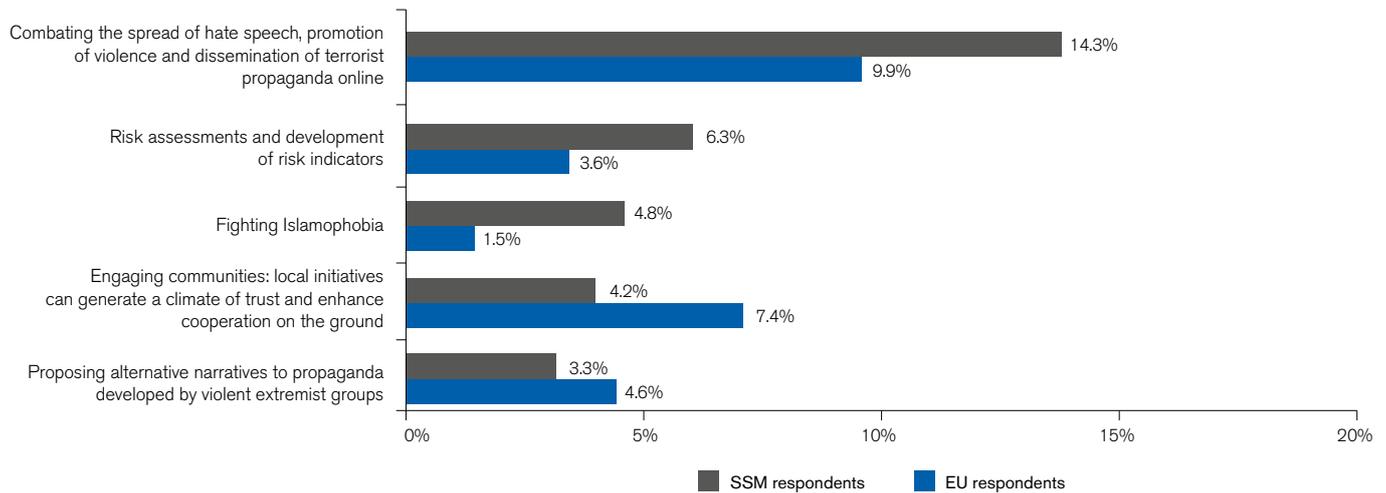
(results show the first choice out of four)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

The last group of options corresponds to softer security measures. It is worth noting that respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries chose “Combating the spread of hate speech” and “Fighting Islamophobia” as top priorities in higher proportions than those from EU countries (see Graph 36).

Graph 36: What should be the main priorities in order to effectively counter violent extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean region?
(results show the first choice out of four)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

In their open comments, respondents elaborate on specific priorities, bring in further priorities and ideas or argue that all these priorities must be used in an integrated and balanced manner. Below is a sample of these comments:

The core should be a tailor-made approach of individual cases that is aimed at finding solutions for the often practical problems that set people on the path of violent extremism. One needs a local level approach and with the participation of professionals from different disciplines (municipality, school, police, health and child protection services). This is in fact the approach in the Netherlands. It is aimed at prevention. For cases where one is “too late”, more repressive measures may be in order first.

Dutch respondent

An integrated approach combining most of the above would be necessary. Neither a military solution, nor a political or economic solution is likely to work on its own. Need to integrate almost all of the above into a coherent approach that tackles the root causes (political, economic and social), the channels of recruitment (online, community), the operational level (intelligence sharing, military responses, etc.).

UK respondent

Neutraliser les parties (organisations, partis politiques, individus...) responsables de l'embrigadement des « combattants » terroristes et dénoncer leurs soutiens étrangers.

Tunisian respondent

Terror as a whole MUST be handled with an iron fist and ZERO TOLERANCE. Wake up Europe!!!

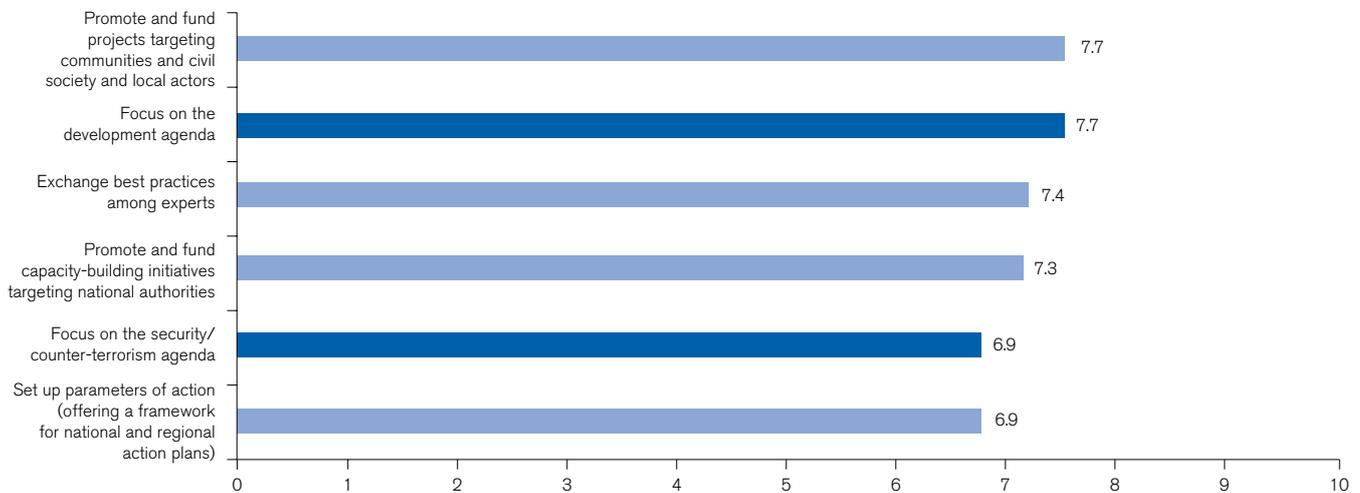
Israeli respondent

AT THE MULTILATERAL LEVEL AND AT THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN LEVEL

Questions 14 and 15 focus respectively on multilateral initiatives undertaken to confront violent extremism and on Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The results to Question 14, where respondents were invited to identify what the primary concern of multilateral initiatives should be, are very much in line with the findings of Question 13. Overall, it appears that respondents think that multilateral initiatives should address root causes (“Focus on the development agenda”) to a higher extent than “Focus on the security/counter-terrorism agenda” (see in dark blue in Graph 37).

Graph 37: The need to address the rise of violent extremism at the multilateral level has been acknowledged and has materialised in a number of initiatives. To what extent should the primary concern of multilateral initiatives be to:

(mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

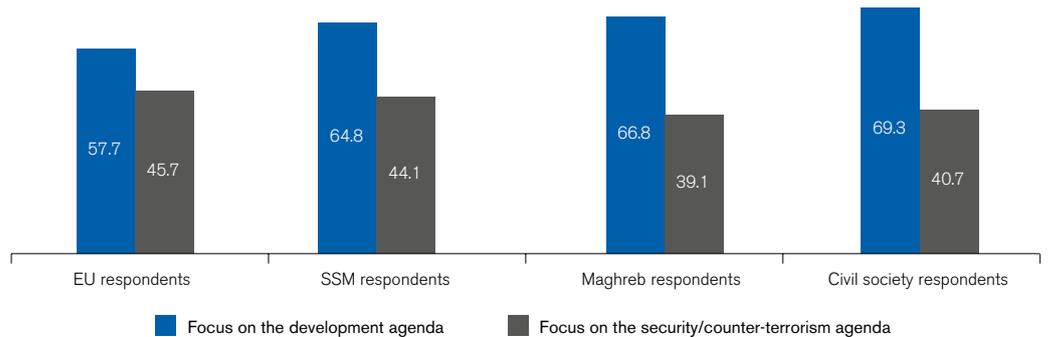
Graph 37 also shows that respondents stressed the importance of communities, civil society and local actors as stakeholders in the fight against violent extremism. Indeed, promoting and funding projects targeting these categories is the most recurrent choice of respondents therefore a qualitative article on the civil society role in this context is included in this publication (see: Gervasoni “Building a Bridge: Engaging Civil Society in Preventing all Forms of Violent Extremism” p. 40).

A more detailed look into the results reveals slight nuances, whose importance should not be over-interpreted though due to the limited variations:

- Respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries are slightly more inclined than EU respondents to consider that focusing on the development agenda should be of primary relevance for the multilateral agenda.

Graph 38: The need to address the rise of violent extremism at the multilateral level has been acknowledged and has materialised in a number of initiatives. To what extent should the primary concern of multilateral initiatives be to:

(the graph below shows the % of "very high extent" answers)

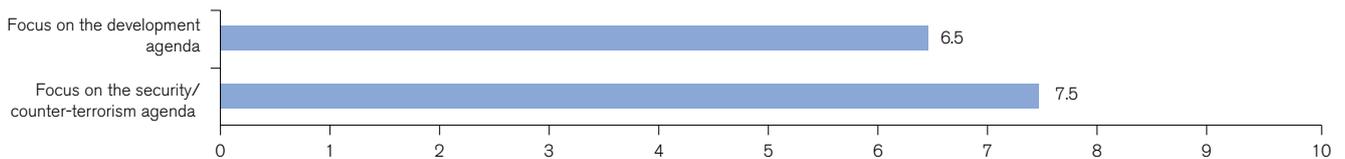


Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

- Israeli respondents think the security/counter terrorism agenda should be more of a concern for multilateral initiatives than the development agenda.

Graph 39: The need to address the rise of violent extremism at the multilateral level has been acknowledged and has materialised in a number of initiatives. To what extent should the primary concern of multilateral initiatives be to:

Israeli respondents (mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)

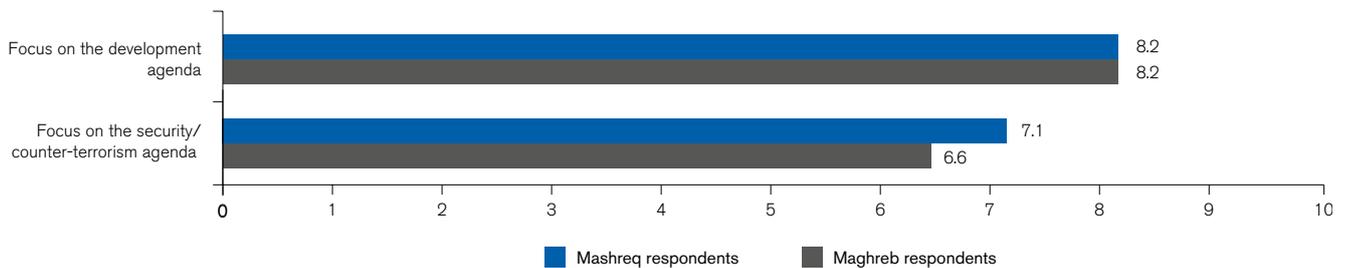


Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

- Respondents from the Mashreq were more inclined to consider that the counter terrorism and security agenda should be a primary concern of multilateral initiatives than respondents from the Maghreb.

Graph 40: The need to address the rise of violent extremism at the multilateral level has been acknowledged and has materialised in a number of initiatives. To what extent should the primary concern of multilateral initiatives be to:

(mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

In their open comments, some respondents also highlighted other important dimensions, as illustrated below:

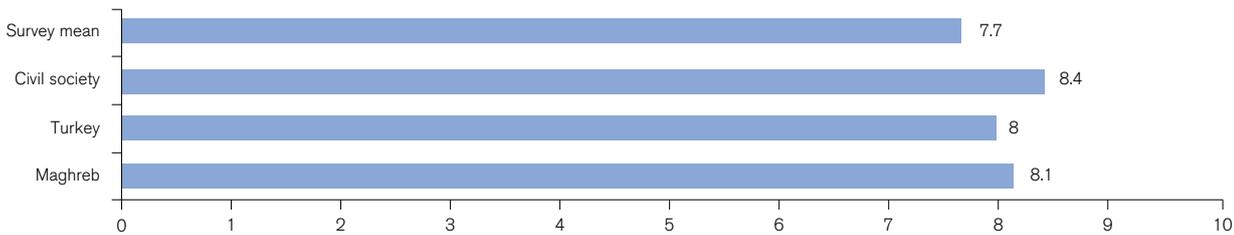
Strengthening international cooperation to stop financing terrorism or supplying it with weapons.

Egyptian respondent

Question 15 focuses specifically on the contribution of the Euro-Mediterranean level in confronting violent extremism. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of five statements. The results converge in the same direction and unambiguously highlight the need for more regional Euro-Mediterranean cooperation on preventing and countering violent extremism at all levels, including among civil society organisations. The statement regarding cooperation among civil society organisations was the most agreed with by all categories of respondents with only slight variations (respondents from the Maghreb, civil society respondents and respondents from Turkey are, for example, above the mean).

Graph 41: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?: Cooperation between civil society organizations working on the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Euro-Mediterranean area should be reinforced.

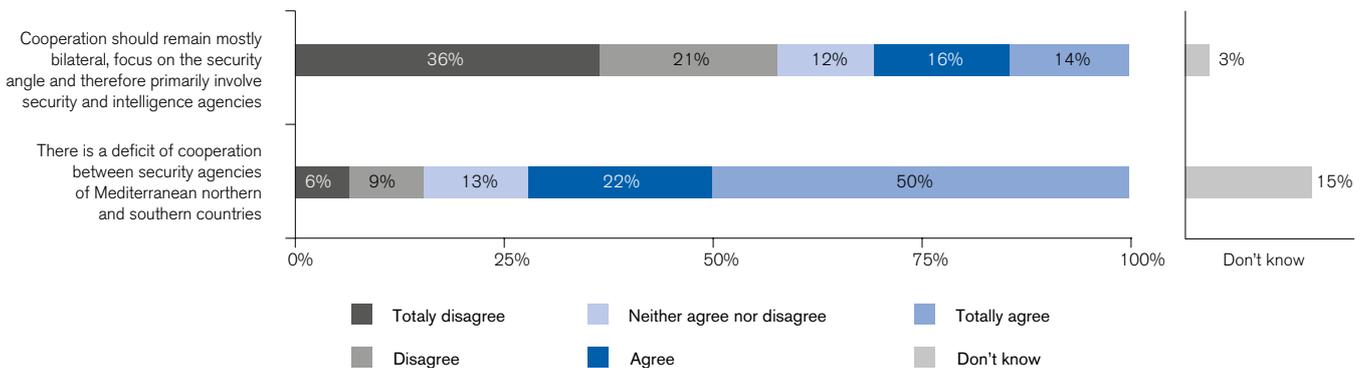
(mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high extent)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

While 72% of respondents acknowledge that there is a deficit of cooperation between security agencies of Mediterranean northern and southern countries, 57% of respondents also think that cooperation in this field should not remain only bilateral, not focus on the security angle and therefore not primarily involve security and intelligence agencies.

Graph 42: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

However, a number of comments point to a certain degree of mistrust and highlight limits of the cooperation between security agencies as well as between civil society organisations:

European security agencies do not work well with Middle East counterparts. The latter are often blindly brutal and politically corrupt.

Greek respondent

Je n'ai pas confiance dans le rôle des sociétés civiles. Certaines sont suspectées de soutenir le terrorisme pour servir des intérêts.

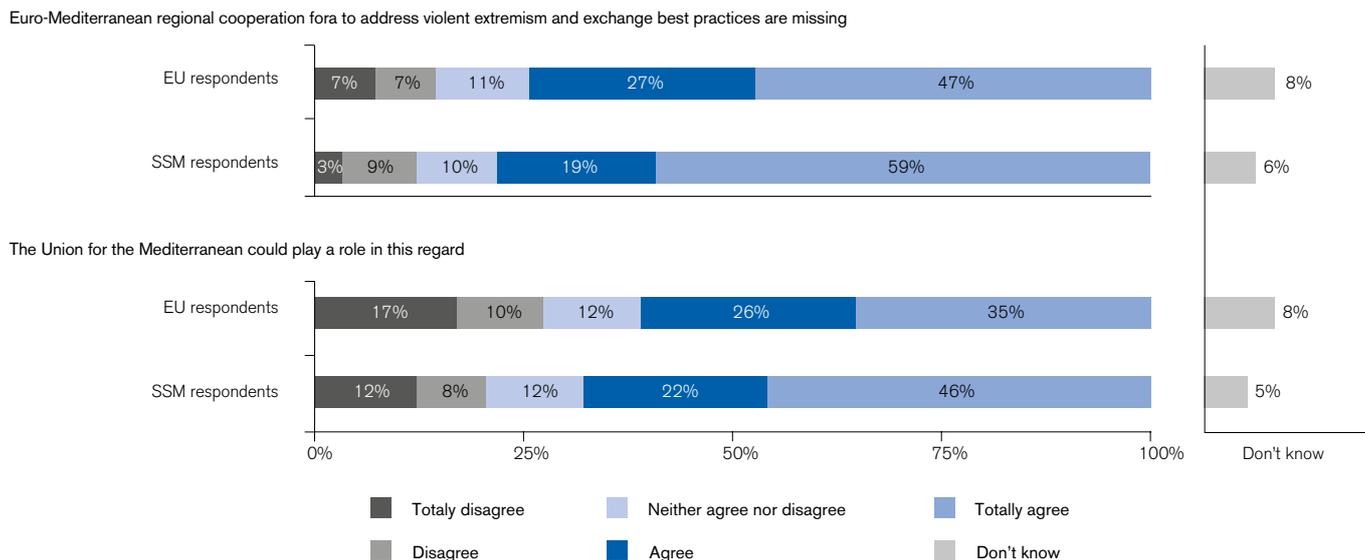
Egyptian respondent

There is a problematic side to cooperation with southern Mediterranean security institutions, as these do not respect human rights standards.

Dutch respondent

A critical majority of respondents (76%) thinks that Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation fora to address violent extremism and exchange best practices are missing and a majority (64%) also thinks that the Union for the Mediterranean could play a role in this regard. Again, there are only minor variations across the board. Respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries seem to be slightly more inclined than their EU counterparts to think that regional fora are missing and that the Union for the Mediterranean could play a bigger role.

Graph 43: Do you agree with the following statements regarding Euro-Mediterranean cooperation?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

Despite the unambiguous call for more regional cooperation that transpires from the results, some open comments shed a more realist light on the challenges that stand in the way:

Confidence building measures will help for a better exchange of intelligence and cooperation between northern and southern countries; cooperation is a two-way street!

Algerian respondent

Euromed has neither teeth nor a clear mandate to intervene.

Dutch respondent

Full cooperation requires full confidence, which regrettably does not exist between all Euro-Mediterranean countries.

Israeli respondent

Les gouvernements du Sud de la Méditerranée ne jouent pas le jeu de la coopération anti-terroriste. Ils instrumentalisent cette lutte pour leurs intérêts politiques. Il y a une volonté d'instrumentaliser le terrorisme pour négocier en rapport de force avec les pays européens.

Algerian respondent

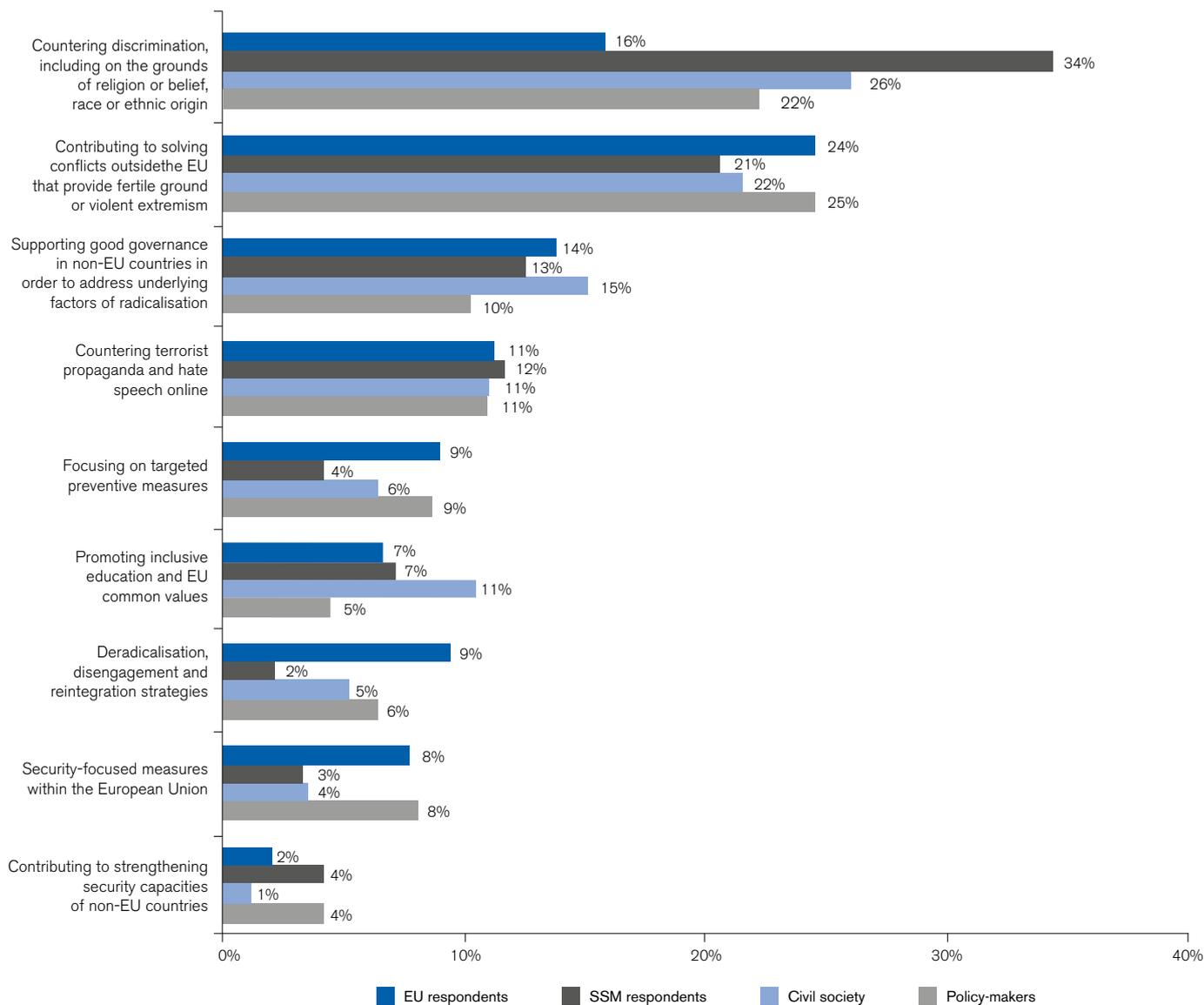
The region requires more cooperation and trust between different countries and actors. Division and lack of trust between countries, security services and civil society actors has been a main asset for terrorist groups. But these kinds of relations are difficult to build. The Union for the Mediterranean can play this role but only if its partners believe in it. It does not seem to be the case for most of them.

Spanish respondent

WHAT SHOULD THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES FOCUS ON AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY?

Again, results to **Question 16** tend to show that respondents do not necessarily see that strengthening security-focused measures within the European Union is a matter of priority, although respondents from the European Union and respondents from the policy community do so in higher proportions than respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries and respondents from the civil society community (see Graph 44).

Graph 44: What should the EU and its member states focus on as a matter of priority?
(results show the first choice out of three)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

On the external front, respondents also agree that “Supporting good governance in non-EU countries in order to address underlying factors of radicalisation to violent extremism” is more of a priority than “Contributing to strengthening security capacities of non-EU countries”.

However, one of the most striking results is the perception gap on the importance of countering discrimination in the European Union as a matter of priority. 34% of respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries ranked “Countering discrimination, including on the grounds of religion or belief, race or ethnic origin” as a number one priority (respondents from Turkey were in particular keen on identifying this as a priority as 77% of them indicated this as one of their 3 options), while 16% of European respondents did so.

Countering discrimination action in all fields should be the main priority. It is better to work on education and combating stereotypes and prejudices that nourish distrust and produce scapegoats and scarecrows.

Palestinian respondent

The EU should be more aware of its role in what the region is witnessing.

Italian respondent

EU countries need to recognize that the conditions on the ground for their own populations are creating vulnerabilities; it's not just about other countries. EU countries do not have a single level of good governance. Even the most stable countries have pockets of unequal governance/discrimination/oppression/service for minorities.

Danish respondent

The most chosen option by EU respondents is “Contributing to solving conflicts outside the EU that provide fertile ground for violent extremism”. Outside the EU, it is worth noting that 65% of respondents from the Mashreq respondents indicated this as one of their three options.

It is not just about contributing to any solution of conflicts outside the EU that will help the EU in this case. How these conflicts, such as those in Syria and Iraq involving Daesh, are solved is as important as whether these conflicts are solved. If Assad stays but Raqqa is taken back, Mosul is taken back but Sunnis in Iraq are discriminated against and the “EU contributes” to this assuming that this is a “solution”, is that what the EU should be doing? I would not think so.

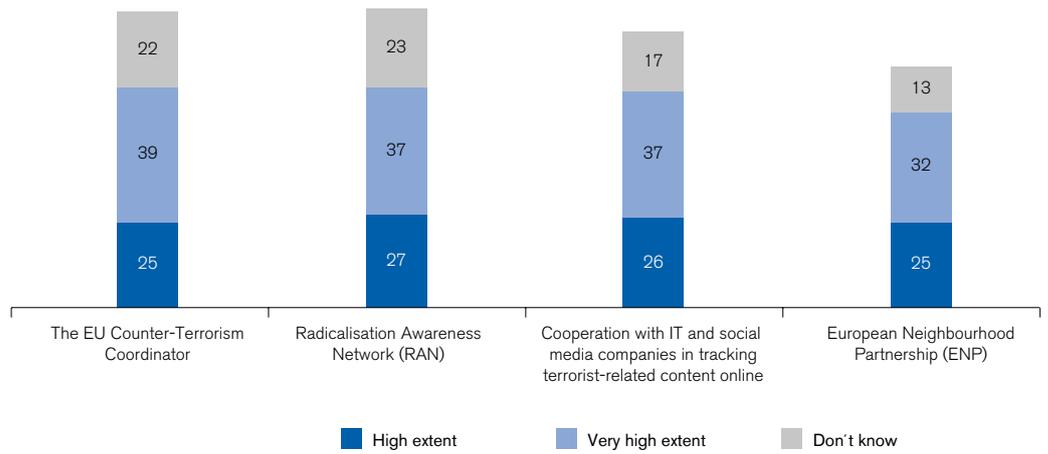
Turkish respondent

ASSESSING EU INSTRUMENTS

In Questions 17 and 18, respondents were asked to evaluate existing EU initiatives and more precisely the effectiveness of general frameworks (Question 17) dealing with violent extremism and more in detail the relevance of counter-terrorism internal lines of action (Question 18). Hyperlinks and footnotes were provided in the questionnaire to ensure proper information for respondents.

In **Question 17**, respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of four very different EU frameworks and instruments, all contributing to some extent to the fight against violent extremism. While more respondents acknowledged their lack of proper knowledge in order to assess the effectiveness of the action of the Radicalisation Awareness Network, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Office and the Cooperation with IT and social media, respondents were also more numerous in assessing these three frameworks as effective to a high or very high extent than the broad policy framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

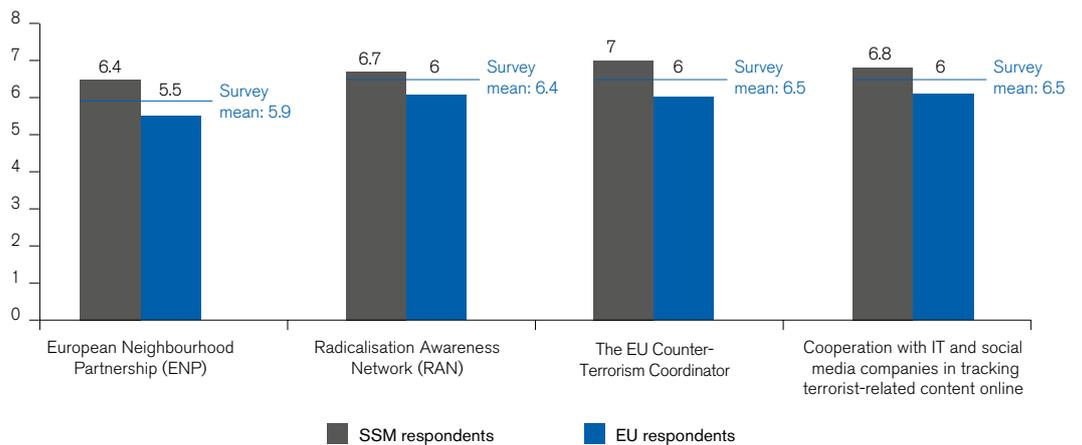
Graph 45: With these strands in mind, to what extent are the following EU frameworks effective?
(answers in %)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

More significantly, it is interesting to note that respondents from Southern and Southeast Mediterranean countries consistently rate the effectiveness of these four frameworks in higher proportions than their European counterparts.

Graph 46: With these strands in mind, to what extent are the following EU frameworks effective?



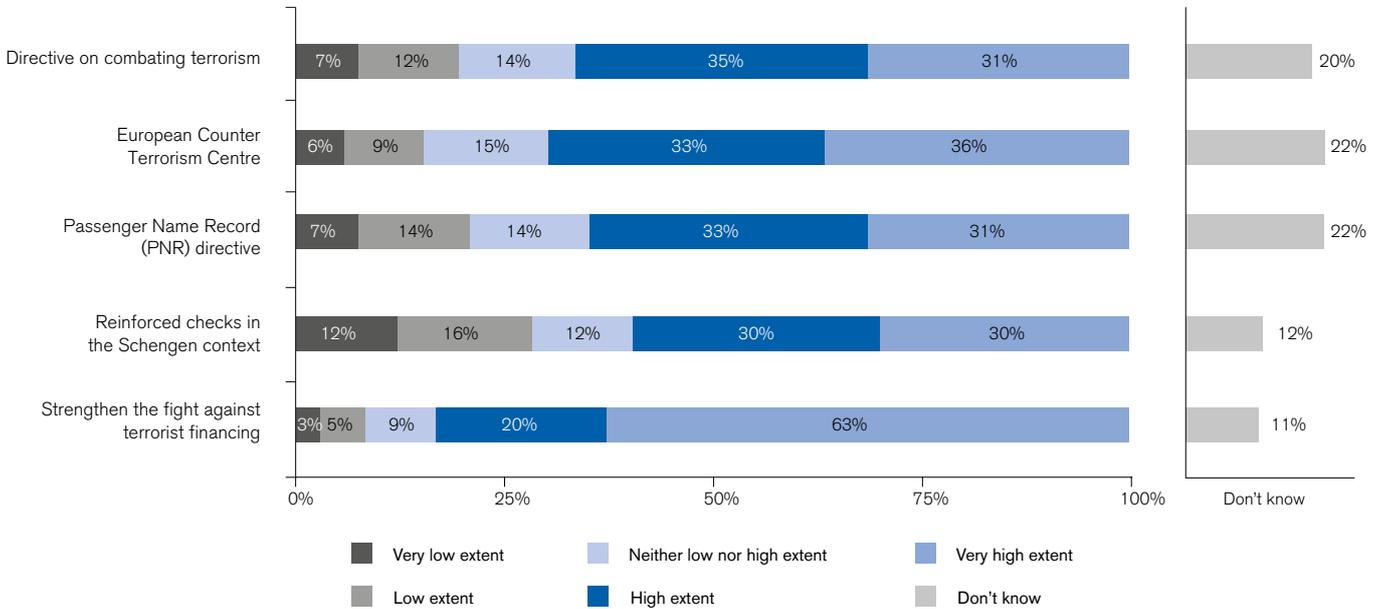
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

Assessment based on current performance. ENP has huge potential but now has an excessively defensive approach focused on stability and resilience and managing migration.
Spanish respondent

RAN is quite new. ENP is still based on a very liberal model of trade that is not appropriate. There is a need for other forms of cooperation and exchange.
Irish respondent

With **Question 18**, respondents were invited to evaluate more concrete initiatives undertaken by the European Union on the counter-terrorism front. Among the efforts undertaken over the last few years, respondents agree that “Strengthening the fight against terrorist financing” has a very high significance. 83% of respondents agreed that this strand is relevant to a high or very high extent. Results point to the fact that the reinforced checks introduced in the Schengen context are assessed as least relevant when it comes to counter-terrorism purposes, especially by civil society respondents.

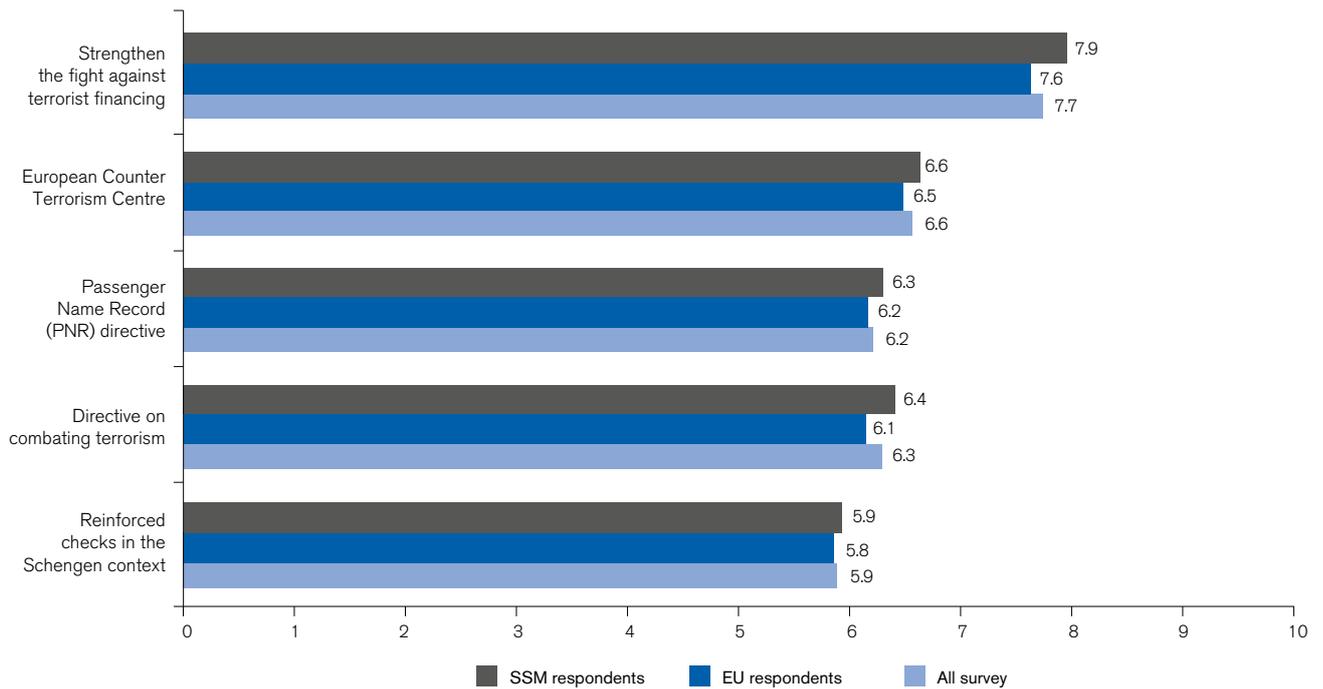
Graph 47: On the counter-terrorism front, the European Union has reinforced its internal and external action lines over the last few years with a series of initiatives. Some of the internal lines of action are mentioned below. In your opinion, to what extent are they relevant?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

The graph below shows again that non-European respondents seem to be slightly more confident in general with the relevance of EU counter terrorism initiatives than EU respondents themselves.

Graph 48: On the counter-terrorism front, the European Union has reinforced its internal and external action lines over the last few years with a series of initiatives. Some of the internal lines of action are mentioned below. In your opinion, to what extent are they relevant?
 (mean 0-very low extent, 10-very high)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 8th Euromed Survey

Below is a sample of open comments:

L'approche sécuritaire a démontré ses limites. L'Union Européenne devrait opter pour d'autres mesures comme la lutte contre le discours haineux de part et d'autre.

Algerian respondent

Les mesures de contrôles ne sont importantes qu'à court terme, mais le renforcement de la lutte contre le financement du terrorisme est une solution préventive et plus radicale pour l'éradiquer.

Tunisian respondent

Les services occidentaux savent parfaitement qui finance le terrorisme. Nous mettons l'Occident officiel au défi de dénoncer, sans ambages, auprès de ses opinions publiques, les vrais commanditaires du jihadisme.

Tunisian respondent

Too many differences among EU member states in their internal and external actions against terrorism prevent the European Union using the right tools and efficient counter-terrorism policies.

Italian respondent