

CIVIL SOCIETY AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR EURO-MEDITERRANEAN COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION

The third block of the Survey explored the connections between civil societies on both sides of the Mediterranean, the existing Euro-Mediterranean frameworks offering some space for civil society's inclusion, and the potential for civil society in boosting Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and integration.

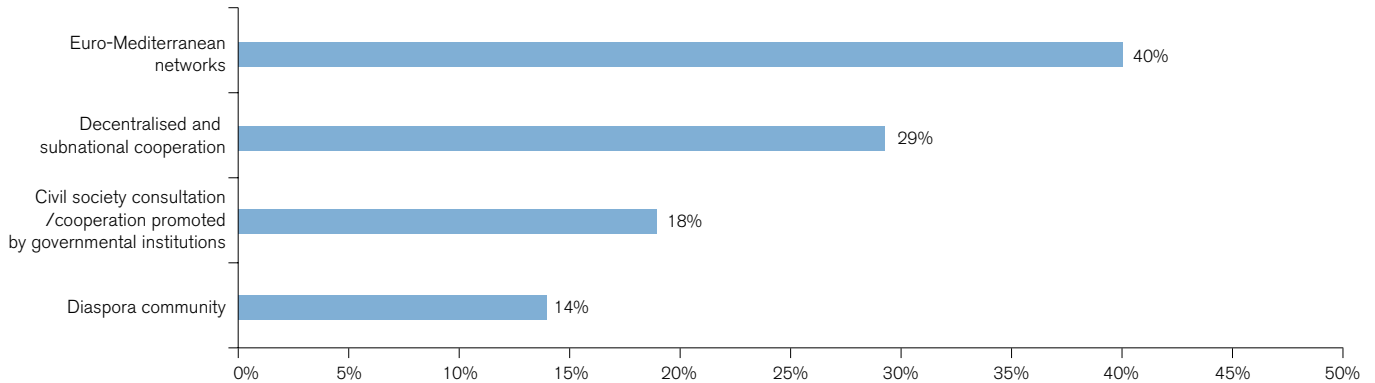
Main findings:

- When it comes to fostering cooperation between civil societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region, the most relevant frameworks are civil society networks or subnational cooperation rather than cooperation mechanisms promoted by governmental institutions.
- Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) labelled projects and policy dialogues sponsored by the UfM are an opportunity to enhance civil society's inclusion, although a number of respondents pointed to some limitations of such participation mechanisms in their qualitative comments.
- More than half of respondents consider that the partnership priorities jointly defined by the EU and its partner countries as part of the ENP reflect the main concerns of civil society. However, European respondents are more sceptical overall than SEM respondents. Israeli and Lebanese are the most sceptical respondents among SEM countries.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents consider that civil society can make the difference in promoting dialogue, regional integration and peace in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Question 18 listed various existing frameworks bridging in one way or another civil societies on both sides of the Mediterranean. A majority of respondents identified Euro-Mediterranean civil society networks, as well as decentralised and subnational cooperation, as the most relevant frameworks, rather than civil society consultations fora convened by international or governmental institutions.

Graph 32: When it comes to cooperation between civil societies in the Euro-Mediterranean context, what is the most relevant framework?

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 4)



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

In their open comments as a follow-up to the question, respondents elaborated on the importance of bottom-up and decentralised networks when it comes to cooperation between civil societies.

Il faudrait relancer les réseaux euro-méditerranéens de même qu'il faudrait mettre davantage le cap sur la coopération décentralisée en permettant aux collectivités locales de jouer un plus grand rôle dans ce domaine.

Algerian respondent

When collaboration is done with corrupt governments like ours, support is not reaching the places it should nor getting the impact it should. When these aids are decentralised and reach networks among different regions, I think it will be better spread and reach the people who need it most.

Moroccan respondent

Comments also point out some elements to improve the potential role of diaspora communities within this decentralised cooperation.

34 millions de migrants dont près de 20 millions extra-européens souvent citoyens des deux rives pourraient jouer un rôle central dans cette coopération.

Moroccan respondent

Connecting diaspora and decentralised bodies may be important; involving local power/authorities, etc. is crucial to achieve results, especially if they are to prove efficient in the long run.

Swedish respondent

Mobility of civil society actors is seen as a key factor for effective and successful cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

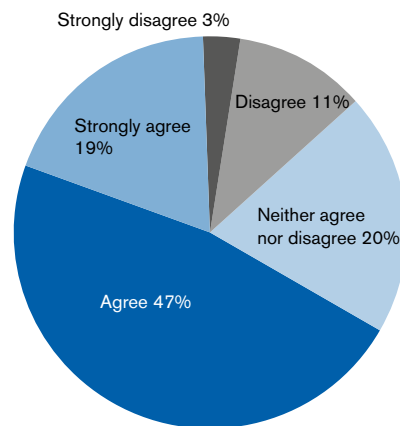
Il faut dire les choses clairement : l'absence de « libre circulation des personnes » constitue la pierre d'achoppement des échanges entre le Nord et le Sud de la Méditerranée. Les élites (tourisme) et leurs enfants (études) arrivent à circuler plus ou moins facilement. Le reste, la classe moyenne ou défavorisée, rencontre de grandes difficultés. D'où les frustrations et son lot d'envie et de haine pour l'Occident !

Moroccan respondent

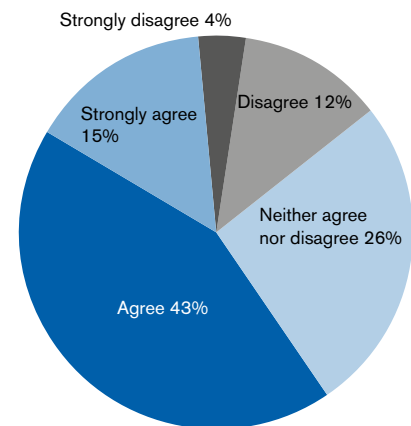
Question 19 focused on how and to what extent the UfM, despite its inter-governmental nature, involves civil society actors in its activities. Respondents acknowledged the potential of the UfM to involve civil society, both through UfM labelled projects and through policy dialogue platforms.

Graph 33: The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an inter-governmental organisation. However, it does involve civil society actors through different channels. Do you agree that:

UfM projects are an opportunity for civil society's involvement



UfM regional dialogue platforms contribute to enhancing civil society's participation



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

Despite the positive results, the open comments point to some limitations of the mechanisms through which the UfM involves civil society and formulates some recommendations in this regard.

Il faudrait améliorer la communication sur les possibilités de participation de la société civile dans ces instances.

French respondent

Inclusion of civil society organisations in the UfM activities is limited to specific ones in the region.

Egyptian respondents

It is difficult to distinguish and see the added value compared to EU regional programmes.

Danish respondent

Il faut plus de visibilité à l'UpM qui paraît très en retrait.

French respondent

As the Mediterranean Youth Climate Network is supported by the UfM, I believe it is an actor that can greatly contribute to civil society cooperation in the Mediterranean. However, I also believe it should have a greater budget for that.

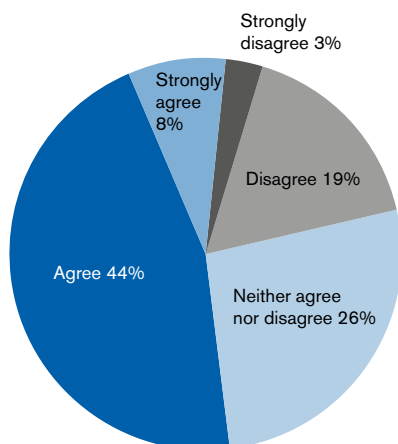
Algerian respondent

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum might serve as a good institutional model for the involvement of civil society of SEM countries in the UfM activities.

Slovak respondent

Question 20 aimed to assess to what extent respondents perceived that partnership priorities agreed between the EU and governments from SEM countries in the framework of the ENP reflect the concerns of civil society. More than half of respondents consider that this is the case.

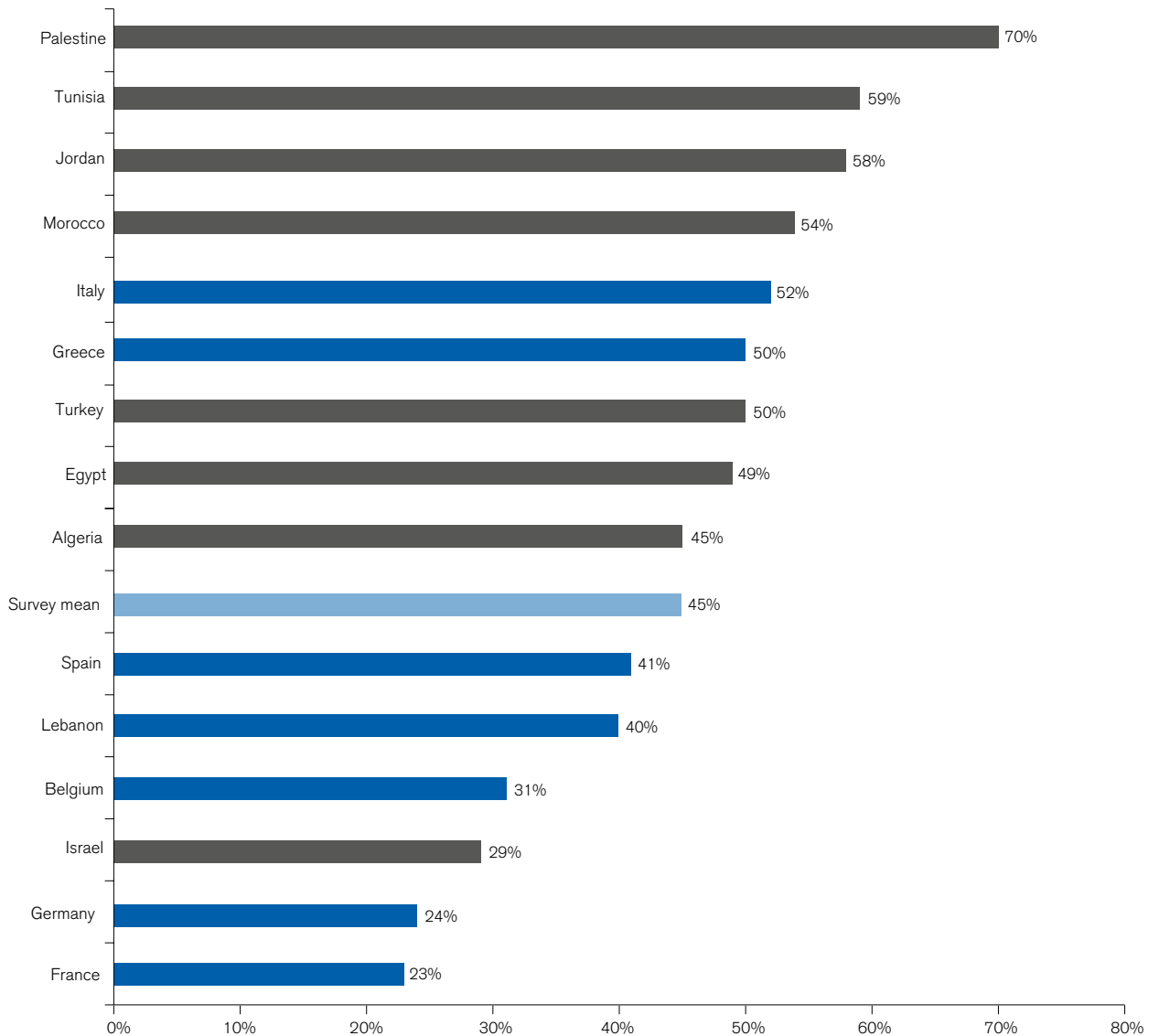
Graph 34: Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU and its southern partners are set to define partnership priorities. Do you agree that these priorities reflect the main concerns of civil society?



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

Overall, respondents from EU countries tend to be more sceptical regarding the matching between partnership priorities and concerns from civil society than respondents from SEM countries. From SEM respondents, Palestinians, Tunisians and Jordanians are most prone to think that both match, while Israeli and Lebanese respondents are more sceptical.

Graph 35: Under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU and its southern partners are set to define partnership priorities . Do you agree that these priorities reflect the main concerns of civil society?
(% of agree and strongly agree answers)



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

Here is a sample of comments formulated by respondents that argued there is a gap between partnership priorities and civil societies' concerns:

The EU should find ways to include representatives of civil society of SEM countries to be part of the debate and definition process.

Slovak respondent

La société civile n'a pas été associée aux consultations intergouvernementales.

Algerian respondent

I guess the background consultations with experts and stakeholders might reflect some of these priorities, but civil society has larger concerns.

Egyptian respondent

Il faut renforcer les liens bilatéraux et les programmes de coopération décentralisée.

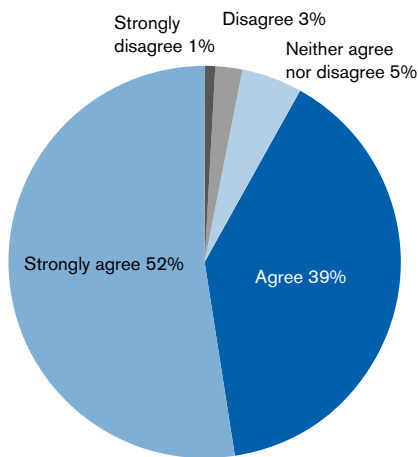
Algerian respondent

Les priorités de la PEV ne reflètent pas les réels besoins des peuples. Elles reflètent les envies des ministères dominants.

French respondent

The last question of the Survey shows an overwhelming consensus among respondents regarding the potential of civil society in promoting dialogue, regional integration and peace in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Graph 36: In an increasingly fragmented Euro-Mediterranean region, do you agree that civil society can make a difference when it comes to promoting dialogue, regional integration and peace?



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

As a follow-up to this question, some respondents formulated recommendations:

Promotion of civil society and civil society organisations should become an active part of foreign policy both at EU level and at national level in the EU countries.

Italian respondent

Revitalising engagement on the third basket, and activities involving civil society on regional and subregional levels. Making better use of already existing frameworks in engaging civil society.

Egyptian respondent

Les gouvernements œuvrent dans l'urgence, suivant des agendas et des contraintes conjoncturelles. Il est temps que la société civile se charge de promouvoir le dialogue, là où les instances officielles ont échoué ou, du moins, fait montre d'un désintérêt irresponsable. La PEV devrait se traduire aussi comme la promotion d'un vivre-ensemble régional.

Tunisian respondent

Regional thematic platforms of structural dialogue between CSOs on the two shores of the Mediterranean can contribute actively to define and set a common solution for the region's pressing challenges.

Algerian respondent

More focus on civil society's sustainability and exchange of best and worst practices... also funding for needs assessment meetings at regional and sub-regional levels among CSO representatives.

Greek respondent

Yes but it needs to be South-South led and not sending SEM CSOs to Brussels to "learn" from EU civil society. The EU should encourage much stronger linkages between its grantees rather than "divide and rule" by making them compete against each other for the same EU funding.

Dutch respondent

Other respondents highlighted in particular the role of youth:

Civil society can make a difference through implementing youth and cultural projects and programmes, locally and regionally, promoting dialogue and exchanging cultures; youth mobilisation across the Euro-Mediterranean countries. This of course needs cooperation among NGOs in the different countries in addition to the funding needed.

Lebanese respondent

Civil society, especially youths, is a key actor, which can make a change and promote regional understanding and cooperation. Thus, more funds should be invested in exchanges (S-S/S-N) between youths to foster cross-regional links.

Polish respondent

Other respondents insisted on the importance of local and regional actors:

Collaboration with the regional non-governmental/CSO actors would provide more effective safeguards for the national/local civil society actors and, to a great extent, protect them from the risk of direct oppressive measures by the national authorities, or from the indirect measures such as hurdles of red tape.

UK respondent

It is precisely from the bottom that fragmented societies can re-unite again. Ensure and prepare a bigger budget on network building through fora, exchanges and cooperation between organisations from both sides of the Mediterranean could be a good beginning.

Jordanian respondent