

THE STATE OF EUROPE

The first block of the Survey aimed to assess the opinion of respondents about the political and security situation of the European Union (EU) as well as its impact on Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (SEM) countries and more generally on Euro-Mediterranean relations.

Main findings:

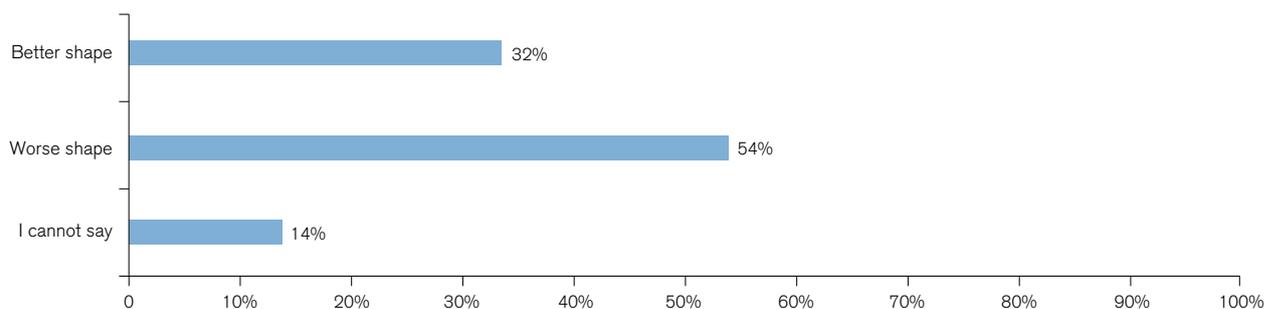
- The majority of respondents believe that the EU is in worse shape than in 1995.
- Respondents from the EU are more inclined than their Southern Mediterranean counterparts to assess that the situation of the EU has deteriorated since 1995.
- Internal phenomena (and in particular populism and nationalism) rather than external phenomena threaten the European integration process.
- Inner divisions on key issues and re-bilateralisation of relations are the most significant factors affecting the credibility of the EU in the Mediterranean. Respondents from Southern Mediterranean countries are more prone than European respondents to identify the EU's weak role in conflict zones as a factor affecting the EU's credibility.
- Overall, the EU is not seen as contributing to the instability of the SEM region in comparison with other countries. The USA is identified as the most disruptive foreign player.
- However, some dynamics within the EU or some of its actions can have negative effects on the stability of its southern neighbourhood, in particular "Securitisatio of migration policies". For SEM respondents "Military interventions from some EU member states" are the main destabilising factor while for EU respondents "Securitisatio of migration policies" comes first.

THE STATE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MAIN THREATS TO ITS INTEGRATION PROCESS (Q1-2)

With **Question 1**, the aim was to find out how respondents perceive the EU, in comparison to 1995 when the Barcelona Declaration was signed.

Results show that a majority of respondents think that the EU today is in worse shape now than it was in 1995 (see Graph 1).

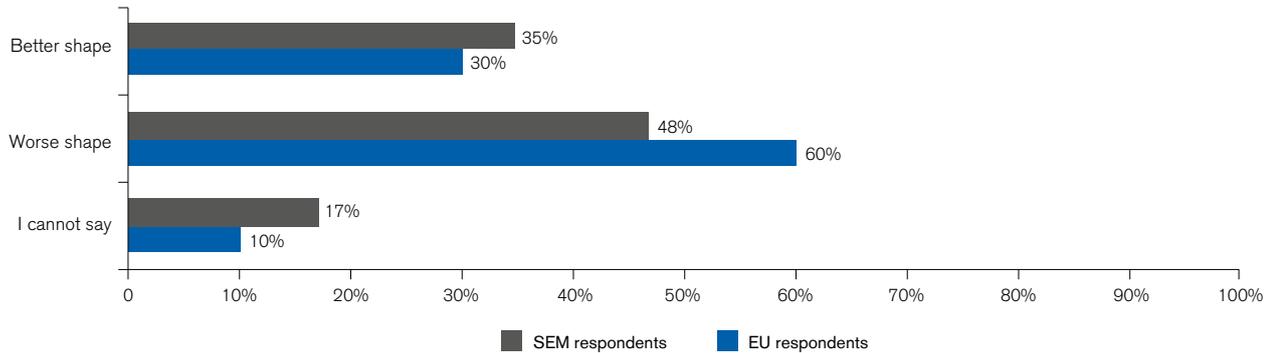
Graph 1: Compared to 1995 when the Barcelona Declaration was signed, overall the European Union today is in:



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

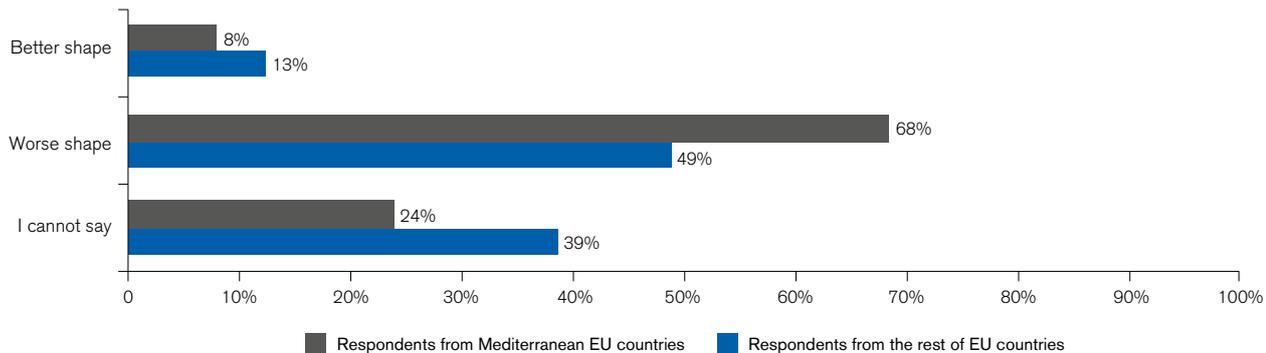
Respondents from the EU and in particular from European Mediterranean countries are more inclined than their Southern Mediterranean counterparts to assess that the situation of the EU has deteriorated since 1995 (see Graph 2 and 3). This result resonates with other findings related to European or Euro-Mediterranean mechanisms from this Survey as well as from previous years, which quite consistently point to a more critical stance from EU respondents than from Southern Mediterranean respondents.

Graph 2: Compared to 1995 when the Barcelona Declaration was signed, overall the European Union today is in:



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

Graph 3: Compared to 1995 when the Barcelona Declaration was signed, overall the European Union today is in:



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

The comments formulated by some European respondents give useful insights in order to interpret these results:

Internal cohesion is lost. The EU has given itself ambitious aims that it cannot realize because of the weakness of its legal base and institutional structure as well as because of the lack of political will of the member states.

Belgian respondent

The EU reduced its impetus towards an EU constitution and a real federal project; we do not yet have a fiscal union, or a solid and credible voice in external action. In parallel, there is a rise in Euroscepticism and populism, Brexit, new security challenges, geopolitics at Eastern and Southern borders, complex relations with the USA, emerging challenges to face... However, the EU has initiated an excellent transition towards a more sustainable development and climate friendly policies but pretends to do much more overall without increasing the budget, and still without a strong push for own resources.

Italian respondent

In contrast to the above-mentioned quotes, a number of comments, in particular from Southern Mediterranean respondents, help qualify this negative diagnosis:

We can list many weaknesses of the European Union (global security, defence, external policy, nationalism, etc.) but in terms of weight in the international scene with only 7% of the world's population, Europe accounts for 20% of global R&D investment; the EU became an actor in its own right acting independently alongside its member states.

Syrian respondent

Firstly, the EU today is more institutionalized and organized. Secondly, the EU policies towards the region have been developed and are more comprehensive. They turned into some sort of "tailor-made" approach.

Turkish respondent

The patterns of the answers also vary depending on the professional background of respondents. Policy-makers are in particular less critical than other groups.

Question 2 focused on assessing respondents' opinions on the main threats – internal or external – to the European integration process. They were invited to choose two options among six. The most-recurrent threat identified by the respondents appears to be "Populism and nationalism" (see Graph 4).

Some open-ended answers point to the destructive effects of populism and nationalism on European cohesion (the lack of cohesion and unity is itself the second most recurrent answer given by the respondents) and on the European value basis:

Populism and nationalism destroy the value basis on which the EU is built [...] The EU lost the socioeconomic principles on which it was built in the '50s: social market economy, with the government acting as a correcting, redistributing mechanism, based on the solidarity and protection of the weakest. Austerity, individualism and egoistic nationalism have become the key drivers of EU policy.

Belgian respondent

The rise of nationalism and populism is highly affecting the process of European cohesion by bringing back a rhetoric of division and power within the borders. Furthermore, slow economic growth, especially in the southern states, make people believe that the EU is no longer placed to address their needs.

Italian respondent

Other open-ended answers highlight the existing correlation among the options as the main cause of the rise of populisms and nationalisms as well as the need for a reform:

Le manque d'harmonisation socioéconomique pourrait être à l'origine de l'accélération des inégalités et du chômage, un terrain fertile à la recrudescence des populismes et des nationalismes, d'où la nécessité d'une refonte qui prendrait en charge ces problématiques sine qua non au projet européen.

Algerian respondent

Others point to the need to tackle inner threats in order to fight outside threats:

While vulnerability to threats from the outside, especially violent extremism and terrorism, is a considerable threat, tackling populism and nationalism and a better reform of the EU to bring it closer to its citizens will reinforce the union and make it strong in tackling all other threats.

Moroccan respondent

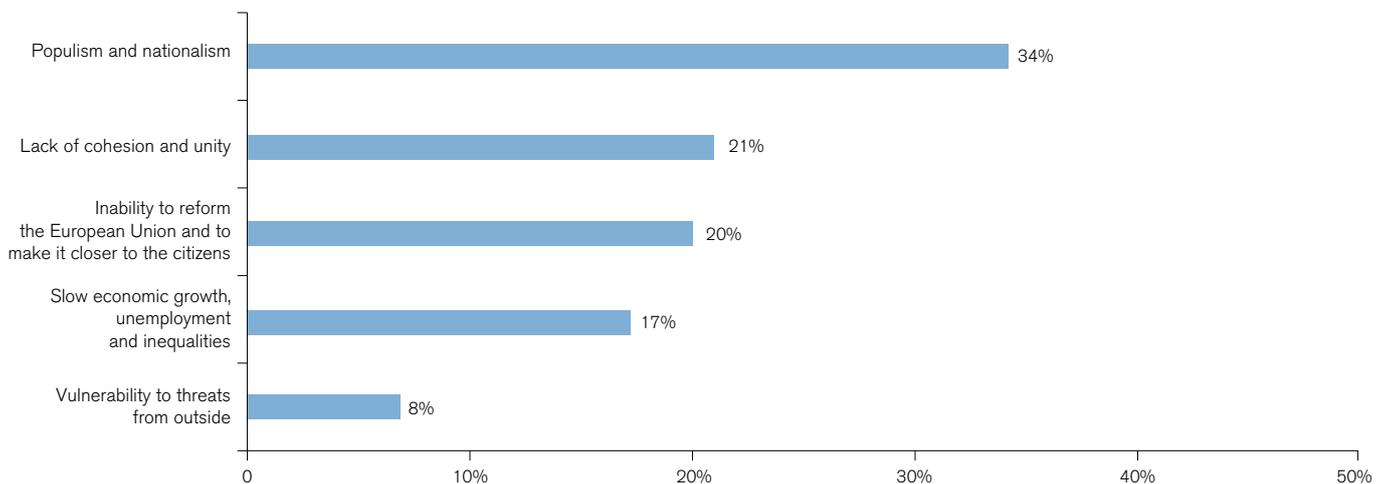
Overall, it is worth highlighting that the four main threats selected by the respondents are related to the internal situation of the EU. Only a few respondents considered that the EU integration process was mainly threatened from outside (see Graph 3).

It seems that the biggest threats for EU integration come from the inside rather than the outside of the Union. The challenges that have arisen with the Brexit process, terrorist attacks that hit the European capitals that were perpetrated by EU nationals, rising nationalism, racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia in the EU members prove this.

Turkish respondent

Graph 4: What is the main threat to the European integration process?

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)

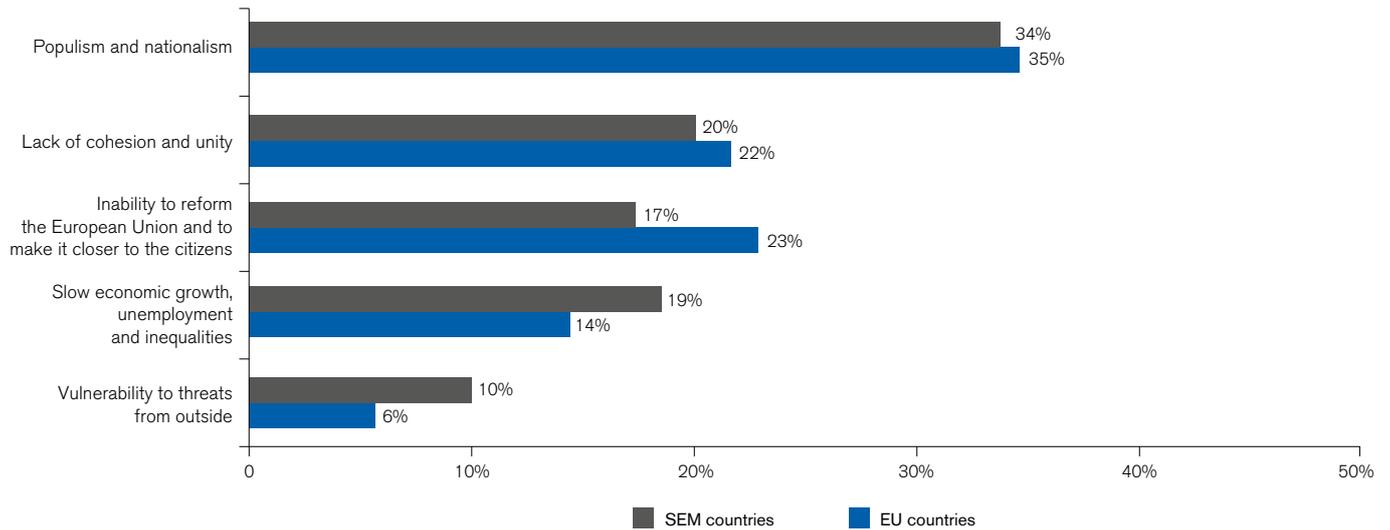


Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 9th Euromed Survey

As shown in Graph 5, there are no major differences in the patterns of answers from European and Southern Mediterranean respondents, even though European respondents are slightly more concerned with the consequences related to the inability to reform the EU and Southern Mediterranean respondents are slightly more sensitised to the effects of the socioeconomic situation or to the threats coming from outside.

Graph 5: What is the main threat to the European integration process?

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)



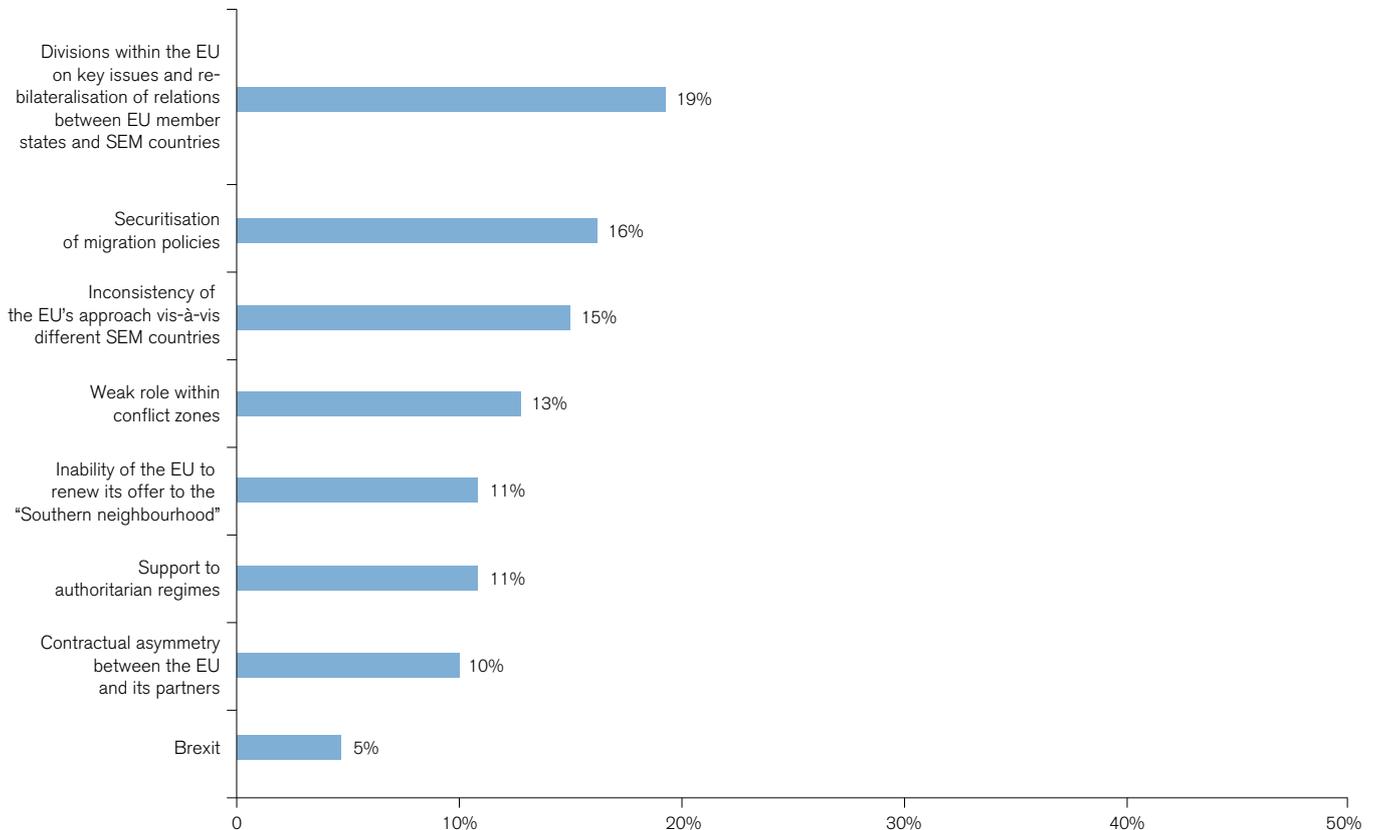
Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 9th Euromed Survey

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Question 3 intends to identify which of the policies or situations of the EU are perceived as affecting its credibility most in the Mediterranean. Respondents were asked to choose two out of eight different options. Respondents identify inner divisions on key issues and re-bilateralisation of relations between member states and SEM countries as the most detrimental factors affecting the EU's credibility (see Graph 6). This option is followed closely by "Securitisation of migration policies" and "Inconsistency of the EU's approach vis-à-vis different SEM countries".

Graph 6: What is most likely to affect the EU's credibility in the Mediterranean?

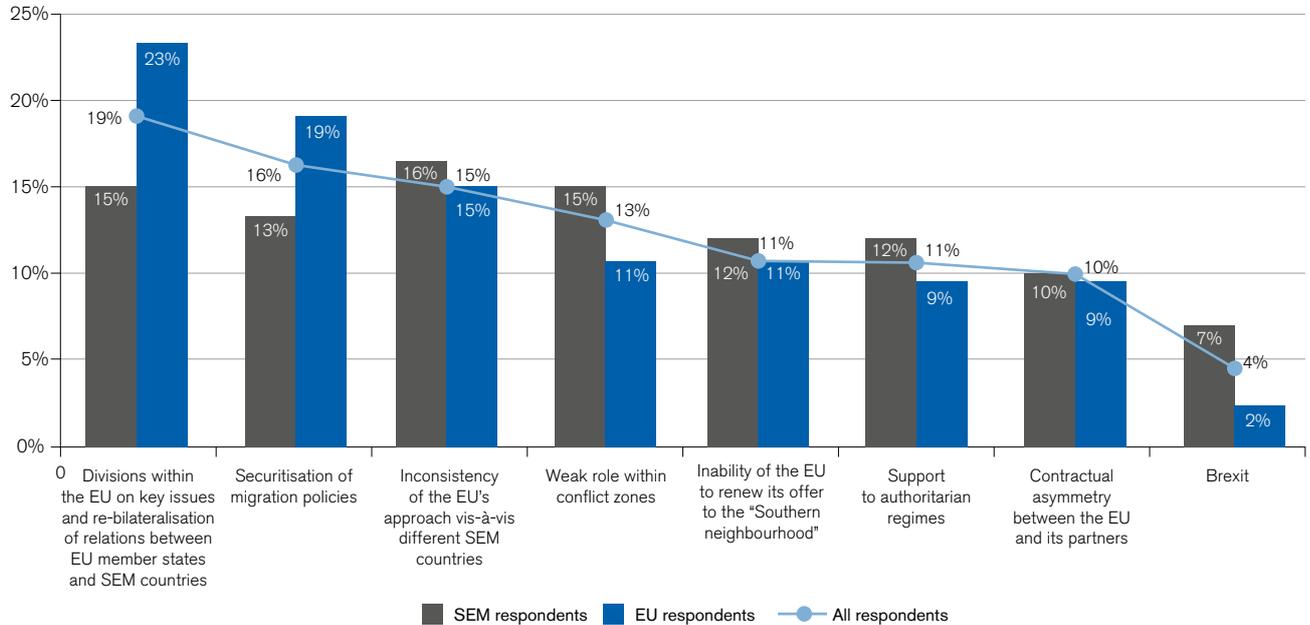
(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 8)



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

Nevertheless, there are some differences in response patterns (see Graph 7). European respondents are more prone than their counterparts from SEM countries to consider that inner divisions on key issues and re-bilateralisation of relations between EU member states and SEM countries or that the securitisation of migration policies are likely to affect the EU's credibility in the Mediterranean. In turn, respondents from SEM countries (especially Israeli respondents) are more prone to consider that the EU's weak role in conflict zones affect the EU's overall credibility in the Mediterranean.

Graph 7: What is most likely to affect the EU's credibility in the Mediterranean?
(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 8)



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

First, there is a noticeable imbalance in the relation between the southern neighbourhood and the EU; a top-down approach that does not treat the countries like equal partners. Moreover, the lack of agreement and consistent policy of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has majorly damaged the image and relation of the EU in the Southern Mediterranean, which have also failed to provide a structural and long-term approach to migration.

Albanian respondent

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE STABILITY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN: CONNECTING THE DOTS

The objective of **Question 4** was to sound out the respondents about which countries are more likely to negatively affect the stability of the Mediterranean. Respondents were asked to select two countries or groups of countries from a list of seven.

As Graph 8 illustrates, the USA, GCC countries (respondents pointed mostly to Saudi Arabia) and Russia rank in first, second and third positions, respectively.

La politique de la nouvelle administration américaine avec ses décisions concernant le transfert de son ambassade à Jérusalem, son retrait de l'accord sur le nucléaire Iranien, a fragilisé encore plus la région du Moyen Orient, et pourrait favoriser malheureusement le radicalisme dans toute la région.

Tunisian respondent

Russia is in a continuous proxy war to maintain and expand its former USSR sphere of influence and it is ready to use proxy (and maybe conventional) war for this reason (Georgia and Ukraine, intervention in Balkans and military domination in Syria). In terms of energy and economic game, China is invading the East slowly but effectively with its energy projects in the Eurasian region and it invests now in the Balkans railways towards Central Europe to guarantee easier transfer of its products towards the old EU partners. China is challenging the role of the EU in Africa too with its non-conditionality partnership approach.

Tunisian respondent

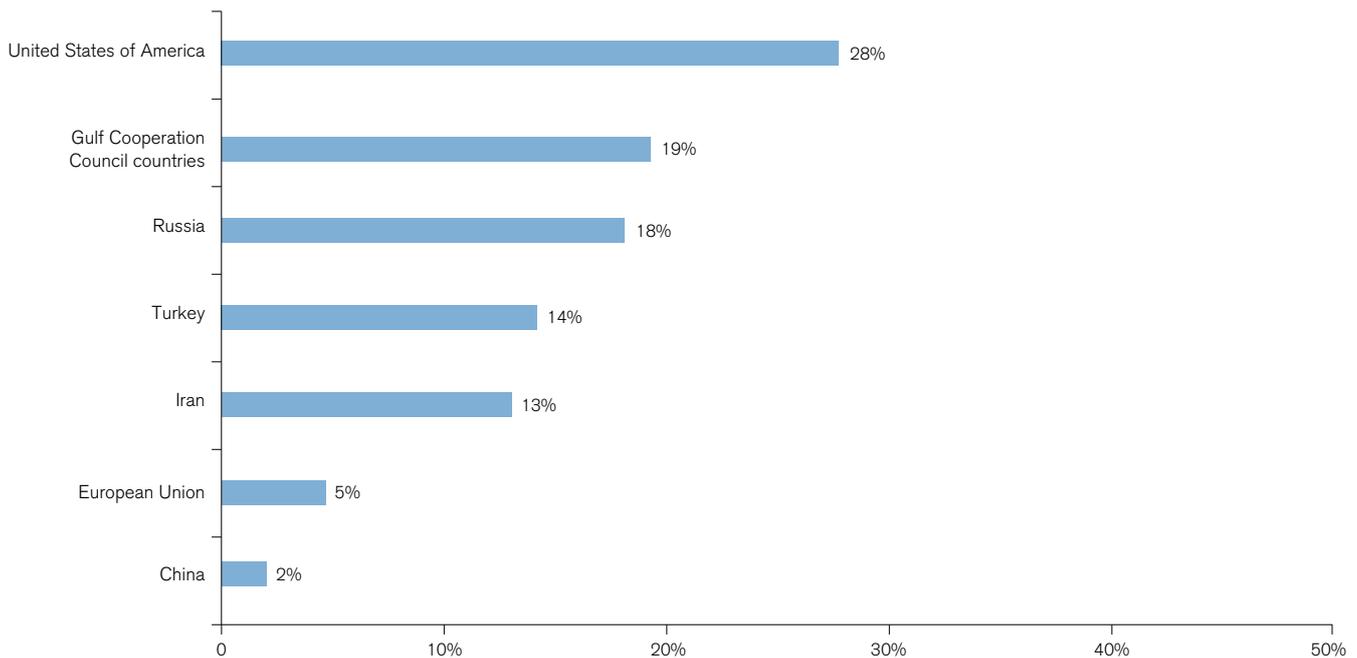
Only a few respondents identified the EU as an actor generating instability in the Mediterranean.

Neither regional powers nor local forces are capable of bringing about stability. Major powers have the final word, and in my opinion there is a grand role for the EU, which was not involved in the negative aspects of the events of the last decades.

Polish respondent

Graph 8: Which of the following actors are more likely to have a negative effect on the stability of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region?

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 7)

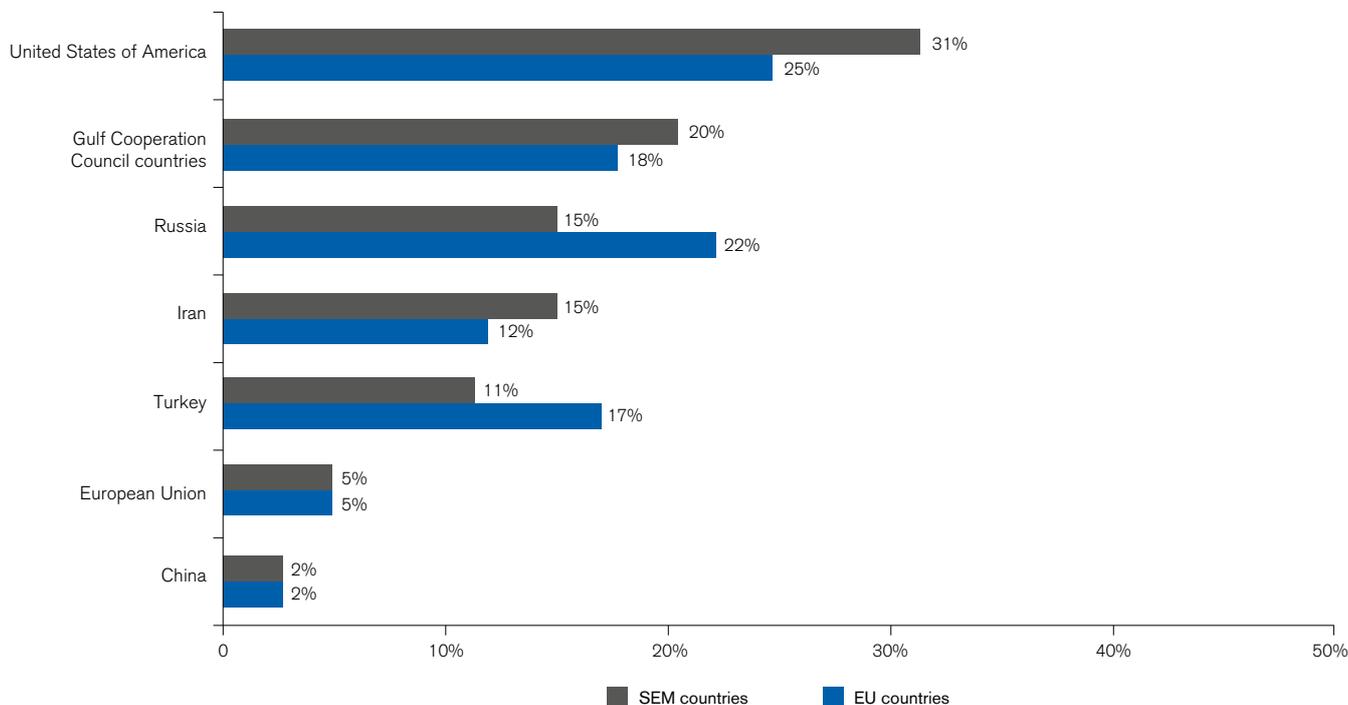


Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 9th Euromed Survey

Respondents from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries are more prone than European respondents to perceive the USA, GCC countries or Iran as a harmful actor, while the opposite happens in the case of Russia and Turkey, which are perceived as having a more significant negative impact by EU respondents (see Graph 9).

Graph 9: Which of the following actors are more likely to have a negative effect on the stability of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region?

(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 7)



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

Respondents from some countries identify Iran as one of the major sources of instability. According to Israeli respondents, the major source of instability in the region is Iran (33.3%), followed by Turkey (27.1%) and Russia (22.9%). Iran ranked third according to Maghreb respondents (12.5%).

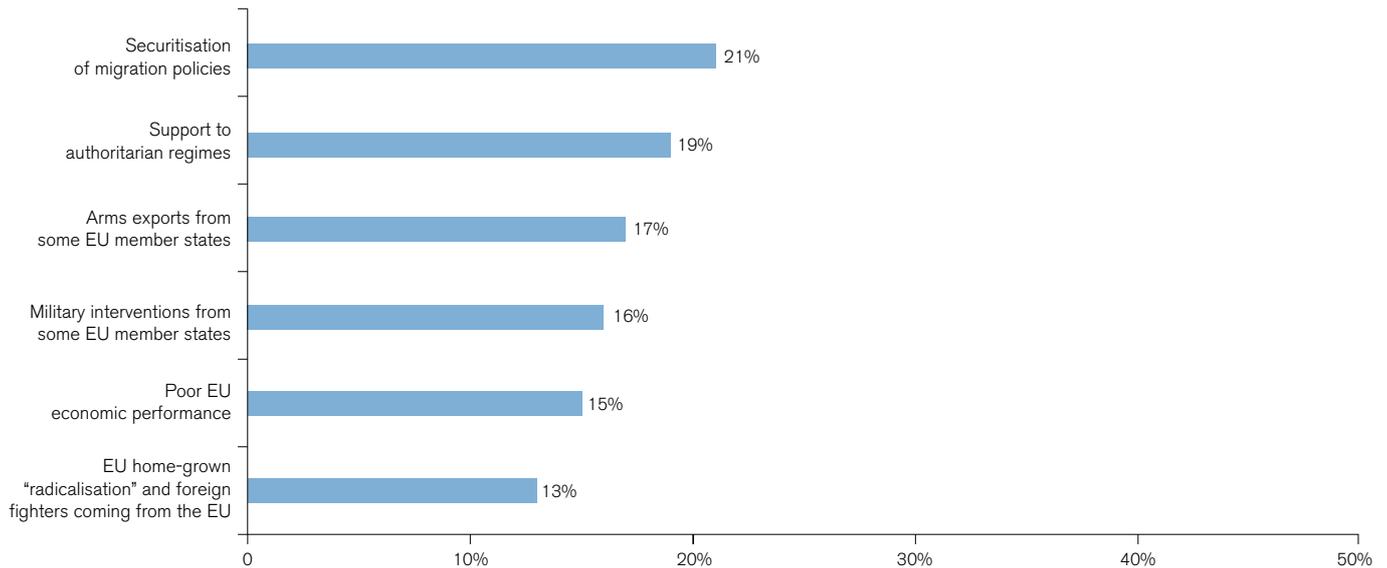
En plus des impacts négatifs du conflit Israélo-Palestinien sur la région, s'ajoute aujourd'hui le conflit direct entre Israël et l'Iran qui tourne autour du projet de la domination régionale par l'Iran.

Moroccan respondent

It is also worth noting that respondents from civil society institutions ranked Turkey second.

Question 5 aimed at determining which situation or policy of the EU is more likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries. Respondents were invited to choose two options out of six. "Securitisation of migration policies" came up as the most common answer (see Graph 10) and European respondents were more prone than their Southern Mediterranean counterparts to choose this option (see Graph 11).

Graph 10: From the following options that relate either to the situation of the EU or to its policies, which ones are likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries?
 (respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)



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

In the open comments, some respondents elaborated on the effects of the securitisation of migration policies:

L'UE a toujours poursuivi une politique très frileuse dans le sud et l'est de la Méditerranée. Elle ne cherche pas à s'impliquer réellement dans des dossiers sensibles comme l'immigration, par exemple. La sécurisation des politiques migratoires a eu pour effet direct la limitation des flux migratoires et une surveillance très stricte des frontières. Par conséquent, ce sont des pays sud-méditerranéens comme le Maroc qui supportent la pression migratoire, en particulier, subsaharienne.

Moroccan respondent

Securitization of migration policies has been an immediate response, but failing to address the root causes and fight migration as a trend. There is a need for a human approach to migration, respecting human rights and dignity, while funding opportunities and quality education in the SE Mediterranean.

Albanian respondent

The security approach of the European migration policy is built on the intention of stopping migration. As much as it seems stronger day by day, it does more harm than good to both the host and receiving countries. It is an unaffordable human cost for Europe.

Moroccan respondent

Les interventions militaires sans alternatives politiques ont tendance à exacerber les conflits, ce qui favorise le climat d'instabilité, de radicalisation et de circulation d'armes (le cas de Libye est illustratif). Le soutien aux régimes autoritaires tout comme le renversement abrupt de ces derniers sans offre politique est des facteurs dont l'effet est négatif sur la stabilité des pays du sud et de l'est de la Méditerranée.

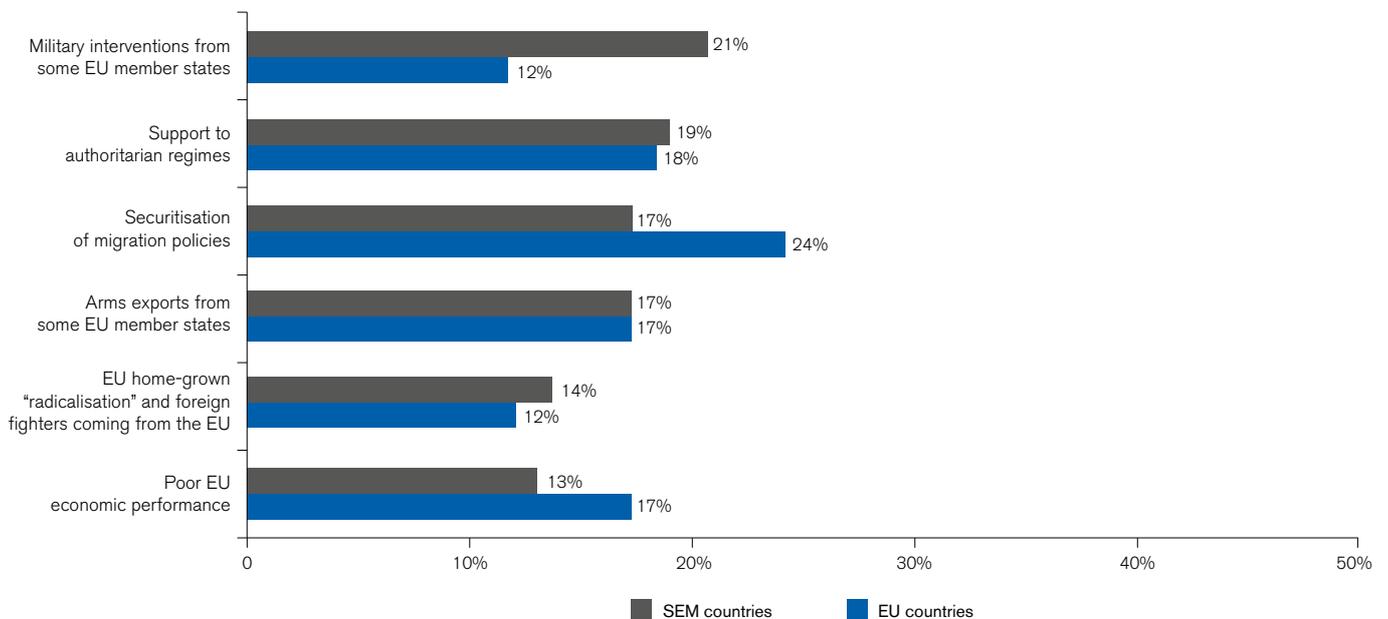
Algerian respondent

The abovementioned options are interrelated. Poor EU economic performance might be seen as an underlying factor, making EU relations with partner countries more difficult in all other areas (trade, migration), since the EU can no longer be as generous as in the past (for objective reasons, as well as reasons related to public opinion in EU member states). This, combined with radicalisation and the subsequent securitisation of migration policies, provides the background for instability (which could be triggered by one of the other factors mentioned above).

Greek respondent

The most significant discrepancy in the patterns of results concern “Military interventions from some EU member states”. This option was ranked first by respondents from SEM countries while it was one of the least common answers from European respondents.

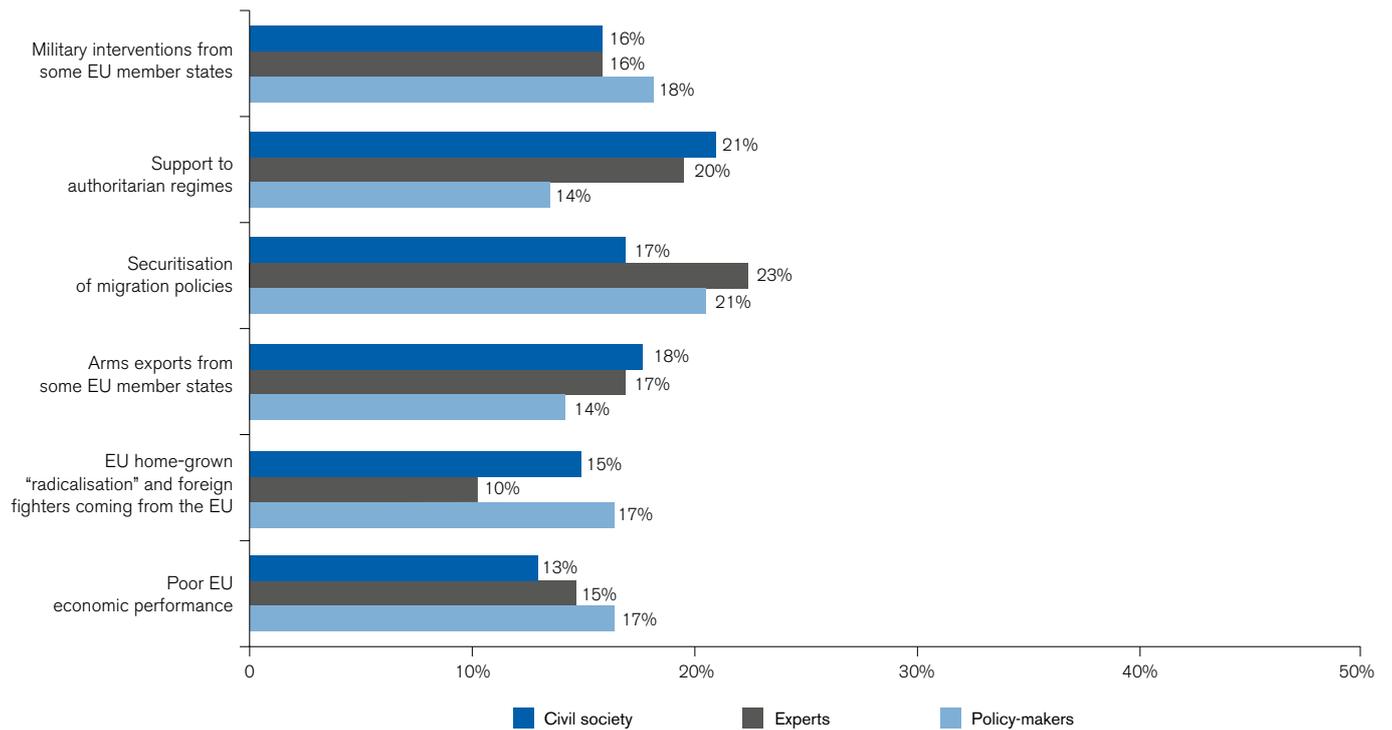
Graph 11: From the following options that relate either to the situation of the EU or to its policies, which ones are likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries?
(respondents were asked to choose 2 options out of 6)



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

A more detailed analysis of the results shows that respondents affiliated with civil society institutions consider that “Support to authoritarian regimes” is likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of SEM countries.

Graph 12: From the following options that relate either to the situation of the EU or to its policies, which ones are likely to have the most negative effect on the stability of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries?
 (respondents were asked to choose 2 options)



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