
INTRODUCTION

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The European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) is a child of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched in 1995 in Barcelona. Since then, the IEMed has always accompanied the various turning points that have shaped Euro-Mediterranean relations. It is therefore no surprise that the IEMed decided at the beginning of 2015 to dedicate resources to accompany the process of recalibration of the European Neighbourhood Policy launched with a Joint Consultation Paper by the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) in March 2015. The IEMed formed a working group with experts from the EuroMeSCo¹ network and other researchers and came up with a consolidated contribution to the ENP review.² It also dedicated the main chapter of the *2015 IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook* to Euro-Mediterranean policies. More recently, it organised a roundtable in Brussels to discuss the ENP review with Michael Koehler (Director Neighbourhood South, DG NEAR, European Commission), Erwan Lanon (University of Ghent, College of Europe) the then Ambassador Menouar Alem (Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to the EU) and Ehab Fawzy (Ambassador of Egypt to the EU).

In the same vein, the IEMed decided to dedicate this 6th Euromed Survey to the ENP review. The IEMed has carried out five “Euromed Surveys” so far. The Survey is based on a broad sample of policy-makers and experts, with the objective of covering the main issues on the political agenda of the region and monitoring the progress in Euro-Mediterranean perceptions and policies. This year, the Survey was conducted among 4,900 experts and actors from the 43 countries that are members of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). 760 responses were received, constituting therefore a representative sample.

This volume offers a good opportunity to contrast the Joint Communication on the ENP review released on 18 November 2015 with the results of the Survey. However, this Survey is only one tool among others to measure how the ENP is perceived by experts on both shores of the Mediterranean. It has its limitations but it usefully complements the wide consultation conducted by the European institutions and summarised in the Joint Staff Working Document accompanying the Joint Communication. The preparations of the Survey as well as much of its results have shown that the ENP remains a very complex policy framework, difficult to apprehend and assess. The questionnaire contained a total of 22 general questions and has been designed to capture the main elements of the European Neighbourhood Policy review. It starts with a general assessment, followed by other sections focusing on specific issues. In addition to closed-ended questions, respondents were given the chance to elaborate on their answers through additional comments.

In addition to the descriptive report of the results and the annexes that set out the results in a comprehensive and visual manner, this publication also gives some space to more in-depth analyses of a few strategic issues related to the ENP review; the objective of the “qualitative analysis” written by experts and policy-makers is to offer keys to better understand some of the main issues at stake. Overall, the main findings of the Survey are in line with the outcome of the broad consultation process carried out by the European Commission and the HR/VP and summarised in the Joint Staff Working Document accompanying the Joint Communication. The results of the Survey show that there is a

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1. EuroMeSCo is the main network of research centres on politics and security in the Mediterranean. EuroMeSCo comprises 102 institutes from 32 countries out of the 43 members of the Union for the Mediterranean.

2. Florensa, S. (dir.) (July 2015). *Reviewing the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Barcelona: IEMed Papers no. 18.

Overall, there appears to be three main concerns:

-the need to better differentiate the relations between the EU and individual ENP partners,

-the need to address ongoing challenges in the Mediterranean in a more reactive and political way as a complement to a more strategic and long-term strategy,

-the need to better involve civil society.

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robust and rather homogeneous support for maintaining the ENP despite a certain disappointment with its achievements. Looking at the open answers of the respondents in the first section but also throughout the whole Survey, there appears to be three main concerns among respondents: the need to better differentiate the relations between the EU and individual ENP partners; the need to address ongoing challenges in the Mediterranean in a more reactive and political way as a complement to a more strategic and long-term strategy; and, last, the need to better involve civil society. While there is no doubt that respondents will find echoes of their first concern in the Joint Communication as mentioned below, the Joint Communication brings fewer novelties when it comes to the modalities of engagement with civil society. Unsurprisingly, the volatile situation and the ongoing crises in the Mediterranean clearly resonate in the results throughout the Survey. Open answers in the first block also relate to the important issue of ownership by partner countries but also of ownership by the EU Member States themselves (an issue that is analysed in more detail in one of the qualitative articles).

After this general assessment, the second block of the Survey aims to evaluate the perception of respondents on the parameters of the European Neighbourhood Policy, both in terms of geographical scope and in terms of actors and interlocutors involved. First, the results show overall support for the current geographical scope of the ENP. This also seems to be the conclusion that the European Commission and the HR/VP draw from their consultation process as they note that “most interlocutors in the consultation on the ENP wished to see some form of a common policy framework for the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood.” On these premises, the revised ENP does not depart from the principle of a single policy framework for the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood. However, Survey respondents indicate that specificities of single ENP countries should be better taken into account. In this regard – and as mentioned above –, we note the strong focus on differentiation coming across clearly in the Joint Communication and hope it will lead to better acknowledgement not only of the separate dynamics in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood but also the various dynamics within the Southern Neighbourhood itself.

Second, the Survey also indicates rather straightforward results on the need for a more effective inclusion of non-state actors on a broader basis, with a more active role of the EU. In this regard, we should commend the European Commission and the HR/VP to acknowledge the need to increase engagement with civil society, including when the incentive-based approach with partner countries has not proven strong enough to create a commitment to reform. However, we note that the Joint Communication does not provide concrete indications on how to renew the engagement with civil society.

Third, results indicate the need to find a new formula to integrate other regional state actors, although respondents from the different sub-regions of the ENP do not agree on which regional actors should be included. In this regard, we note the idea presented in the Joint Communication to use “‘Thematic Frameworks’ to provide a regular forum to discuss joint policy approaches, programming and investment that reach beyond the neighbourhood,” including on issues such as migration, energy and security.

The third block of the Survey is dedicated to the methodology of the ENP, i.e. to the modalities of cooperation (ENP instruments) and to the scope (priorities/areas of cooperation). In general, there seems to be no massive discontent with current instruments of the ENP, which is a rather counter-

intuitive finding as the various instruments of the ENP (including Annual Reports, Association Agreements, Association Councils...) have been widely criticised during the consultation process and in fact have been revised with the ENP review. However, the results of the Survey are not completely at odds with this trend. Indeed, among all tools available, most of the respondents have chosen “issue-based cooperation agreements on an ad hoc basis” as the tool that should be privileged, thereby showing an appetite for moving away bureaucratic tools. The Joint Staff Working Document states that “many critics also challenged some of the formal tools the policy has used. Some think tank authors consider that the ENP Action Plans and Progress Reports are not suitable for many ENP countries and consider that the time, effort and EU resources that go into preparing the ENP reports are disproportionate to the practical results they generate in the ENP countries. Some partner governments also criticised these documents. However, civil society groups in particular consider that the ENP Action Plans and Progress Reports are useful tools for encouraging democratic reforms. Submissions from partners and civil society groups suggest that there is a strong case for lighter procedures.” All in all, the efforts of the Joint Communication to rationalise the toolbox (e.g. through getting rid of the annual progress report) and to make it more flexible (i.e. lighter and more flexible trade agreements for those partners who do not want DCFTAs) are welcomed. The ENP has been far too process-based until now and it needs to free itself from heavy procedures that make it difficult to understand.

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In terms of cooperation criteria, results show a preference to engage rather than to exclude countries that are not committed to domestic reform. It is remarkable that the idea to exclude countries that are not committed to domestic reform has most traction among Mediterranean Partner Countries, while this option is widely rejected among respondents from non-Mediterranean EU countries. Respondents have stressed rather consistently the need for the EU to engage civil society in cases of countries not committed to domestic reforms. It is therefore positive to find this scenario mentioned in the Joint Communication.

Linked to the issue of how to engage with partner countries and on what criteria is the issue of the scope of cooperation, i.e. what areas of cooperation should be privileged. This issue is all the more important now that the EU will engage in a consultation with ENP partners to determine specific areas of cooperation in order to address the criticism that the ENP has been encompassing too many cooperation areas until now. We decided to closely follow the typology of seven areas of focus identified in the Joint Consultation Paper released in March 2015: promote trade and inclusive and sustainable economic development; increase engagement with youth and women; transnational challenges such as health security, climate and environment; face governance challenges such as rule of law and human rights; improve connectivity in sustainable transport and energy; mobility and migration; and security threats. Results highlight the difficulties of the exercise to set priorities and to limit the scope of cooperation to only a few areas. A number of pages of the descriptive report are dedicated to analysing the complex results in detail, including by highlighting differences of answers according to the origins of the respondents and their institutional affiliations. Among other findings, it comes out that “increasing engagement towards youth and women” is preeminent for some Mashreq countries, while in the Maghreb “governance and security” are considered more important. The Survey also looked more closely into the issues of migration and security. In terms of security, the main focus should be on prevention of radicalisation and the fight against terrorism according to the respondents. In turn, tackling structural causes of migration in the country of origin is identified as the main challenge when it comes to cooperation on migration and mobility. Therefore, it is to be welcomed

that the Joint Communication identifies increasing “cooperation on root causes of irregular migration” as a priority theme. The IEMed also welcomes the efforts to promote legal migration schemes.

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The fourth and last block in the descriptive report looks into horizontal and strategic aspects of the ENP. Questions 7, 8 and 9 explore issues related to the articulation of the ENP with the wider EU policy framework and address the application of values, the prospects for integration with other EU policies for the partners and the relation with other foreign policy instruments. Questions 16 and 17, on their part, investigate the expectations of partner countries towards the ENP. The Survey shows that respondents think that the ENP is not applying EU values consistently. The IEMed also notes that “good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights” are included in a specific section under the Joint Communication and not under section V dedicated to proposed joint priorities of cooperation. It is important that the strategic move from the “more-for-more” discourse that dominated 2011 to the “stabilisation” discourse that seems to dominate in the latest Joint Communication is not accompanied by a lesser focus on dialogue on human rights, democracy and governance. As mentioned above, this block also aims to investigate what respondents believed the Mediterranean Partner Countries seek in the European Neighbourhood Policy. Open answers show that it is mainly thought that the economic gain has the biggest role in drawing the interest of the MPCs in the Policy. Many respondents also address the issue of sharing expertise and know-how in public policy and technical matters and the improvement of trade through the ENP.

Rather counter-intuitively, a breakdown of answers based on geographical criteria shows that respondents from the EU seem to be keener on the perspective of offering prospects for further integration with some of the EU policies than respondents from Mediterranean Partner Countries. The large majority of respondents see positively the integration of the ENP with the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The idea that the ENP should have a more integrated role in the overall external policies of the EU seems to feature strongly in the answers from EU respondents.

Conclusion

In April 2015, the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU noted in its conclusion that “the ENP aims to develop a democratic, stable and prosperous neighbourhood, based on a commitment to fundamental values, including the rule of law, the protection of human rights and gender equality.”

A stable neighbourhood. While we will need to wait for the outcome of the consultations between the EU and its partners to get a sense of how the ENP will look, the Joint Communication released on 18 November 2015 shows that stabilisation and security are at the core of the revised ENP. Stability and security are undoubtedly of key importance for the Mediterranean. EuroMeSCo will dedicate its 2016 annual conference to the security architecture in the Mediterranean ahead of the presentation of the new EU global strategy that we will follow closely. We at the IEMed are convinced that one of the best recipes for stabilisation is further regional cooperation and integration. In this regard, we note that the Joint Communication made strong references to the increasing role of the UfM as the central platform for regional cooperation and hope that, based on its successful achievements so far, the UfM will be given the means to fulfil the central task that it has to accomplish for the benefit of the whole region.

A prosperous neighbourhood is also essential to stability. And the European Union can contribute to the economic development of the Southern Mediterranean. The Survey shows that the ENP is expected to do more in terms of trade and economic cooperation. The question of financial assistance also arises. While we note that the ENP review as a political exercise is disconnected from the overall ENI financial allocation that remains the same for 2014-2020, we welcome the acknowledgement in the Joint Communication that: 1) financial and economic support is key (“Developments in the neighbourhood countries have indicated a growing need for international financial and economic support to underpin necessary transition and stability”); 2) existing support is too limited (“The European Union’s existing toolbox provides for resources that are targeted to a variety of issues, but in many cases limited in size when compared to the needs that have and can be identified”); and 3) the EU will review its financial tools (“The Commission will therefore conduct an in-depth assessment over the coming months with a view to developing options, including an instrument, which could better and more efficiently address the financial needs of neighbourhood countries, at the same time supporting their on-going necessary reform efforts. The Commission and the High Representative will seek to speed up aid delivery by streamlining procedures. They will examine the case for a ‘flexibility cushion’ within the ENI, i.e. to set aside resources until used for urgent programming of unforeseen needs, particularly for conflict and post-conflict needs; refugee support; crises and disaster response; and for security and stabilisation programmes.”). While doing so, we think it is important to give priority to the countries that are more ambitious in terms of more integration with the EU and that need it, Tunisia.

A democratic neighbourhood. The Joint Communication seems to announce a less prescriptive ENP. The assumption noted in the Joint Staff Working Document that “principles of democratic governance are embraced by only a few partners” should not lead to less engagement but rather to more engagement in the field of democracy and human rights. Being less prescriptive should not lead to giving up on the strong commitment of the EU to democracy and human rights that is in its DNA. The Joint Communication notes that more engagement with civil society is needed, in particular in the cases of these countries. However, it fails to give more detail on how to achieve this. We remain convinced that promoting stability in the Mediterranean goes hand in hand with the promotion of democracy and human rights.