

DESCRIPTIVE REPORT



20 years of the European Neighbourhood Policy: a general assessment

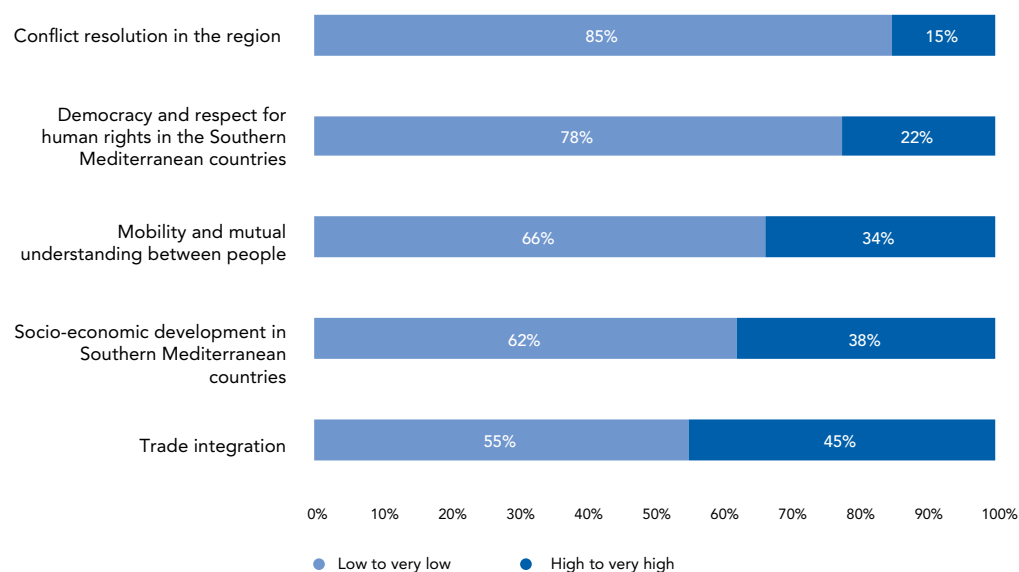
The first block of the EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey aimed to assess the European Neighbourhood Policy's (ENP) impact.

Main findings:

- There is a consensus amongst respondents that the ENP has had a limited impact on the main areas of the cooperation agenda with Southern partners.
- Respondents clearly agree that "Conflict resolution" and "Democracy and respect for human rights" have been less impacted with low to very low assessments near to 80%.
- Almost a half of all respondents considered that trade integration was positively impacted.
- When it comes to identifying the causes of the limited impact, respondents depicted a combination of several elements, but highlighted disagreement on priorities among EU and ENP partners.
- Among EU respondents, the lack of cohesion between member states and the EU's foreign policy tools was identified as an important element that explains the low impact of the ENP.

The **first question** of the survey invited respondents to evaluate the impact of 20 years of the ENP. It asked participants to assess the extent to which different policy areas have been effectively impacted by the ENP. According to respondents, the ENP had a low impact on all assessed areas (see graph 1). Respondents considered that "Conflict resolution" and "Democracy and respect for human rights" were the least impacted areas with 80% selecting low to very low. A more moderate, yet negative, evaluation was given to "Mobility and mutual understanding" and "Socio-economic development" while "Trade integration" had the least negative result.

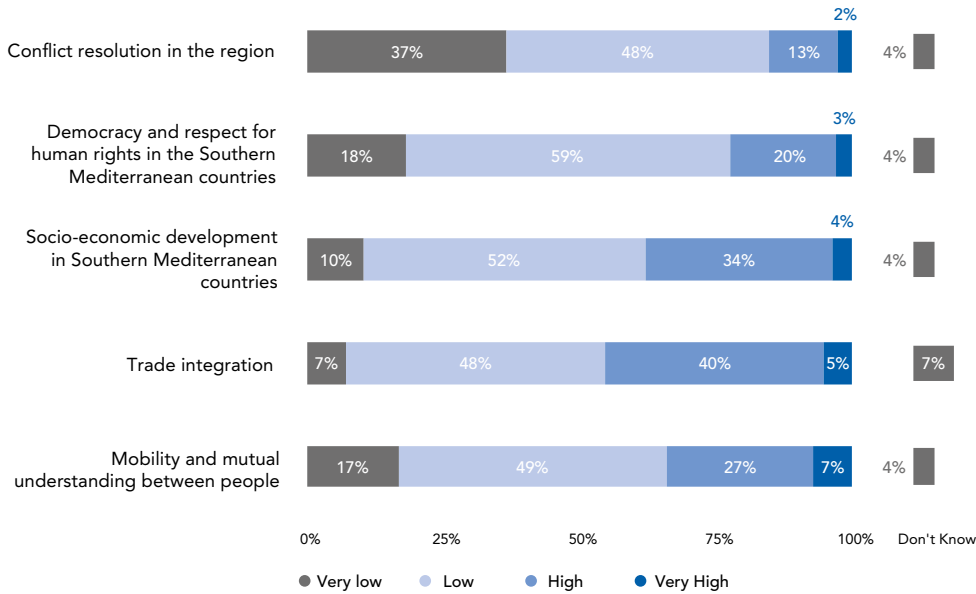
Graph 1: Q.1 The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was designed 20 years ago. It became the structuring framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Since then, to what extent do you consider that it has effectively impacted the following areas?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Zooming in on these results (graph 2), percentages of 'very low' or 'very high' categories display some nuances. The trend is that 'very low' is much more common than 'very high'. The case of "Conflict resolution" featured a significant amount of very low responses (almost 40%). In comparison with the other choices, "Trade integration" had the smallest percentage of 'very low' answers. Focusing on positive evaluations, percentages of 'very high' impact were well under 10%.

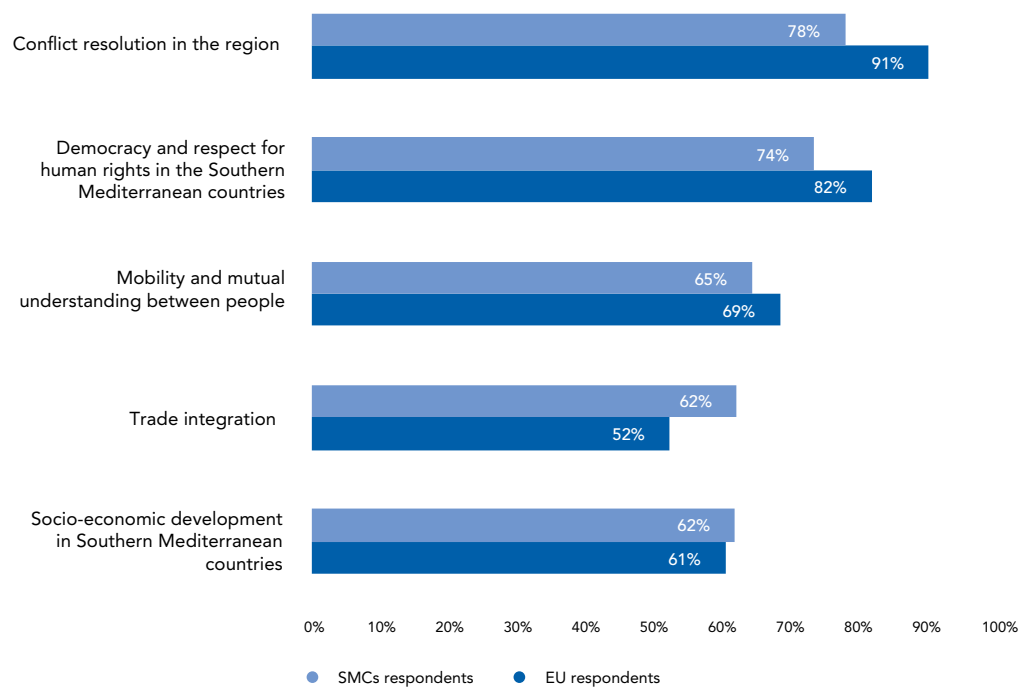
Graph 2: Q.1 The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was designed 20 years ago. It became the structuring framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Since then, to what extent do you consider that it has effectively impacted the following areas?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

When the data is disaggregated between EU and Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) respondents some trends emerge (see graph 2bis). Those from the EU were more critical of the effectiveness of the ENP’s impact on conflict resolution, democracy and human rights and mobility and mutual understanding in the region, when compared with those from the south. When it came to trade integration, the tables turned. SMCs respondents saw the ENPs impact on trade integration in a more positive light, with a margin of 10%.

Graph 2bis: Q.1 The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was designed 20 years ago. It became the structuring framework of Euro-Mediterranean relations. Since then, to what extent do you consider that it has effectively impacted the following areas?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In their comments, respondents highlighted some elements that could help explain the ineffective impact of the ENP:

The objective of a common area of shared prosperity and good neighbourliness has totally failed. Partly because it was ill-designed from the beginning (replication of the enlargement policy and process but without enlargement, which was particularly ill-suited for the neighbourhood south).

— French respondent

While the ENP is an opportunity to strengthen Euro-Mediterranean relations at all levels, its security-driven edge only reproduces a rebound effect of more displacement of vulnerable populations. A more comprehensive approach that addresses the recent geopolitical turmoil in the Sahel and North Africa is of paramount importance. The EU should revisit its 'equal partnership' schemes and terms with the neighbouring countries.

— Moroccan respondent

Even though I think it brought the neighbourhood closer to Europe, it did not bring Europe to the neighbourhood.

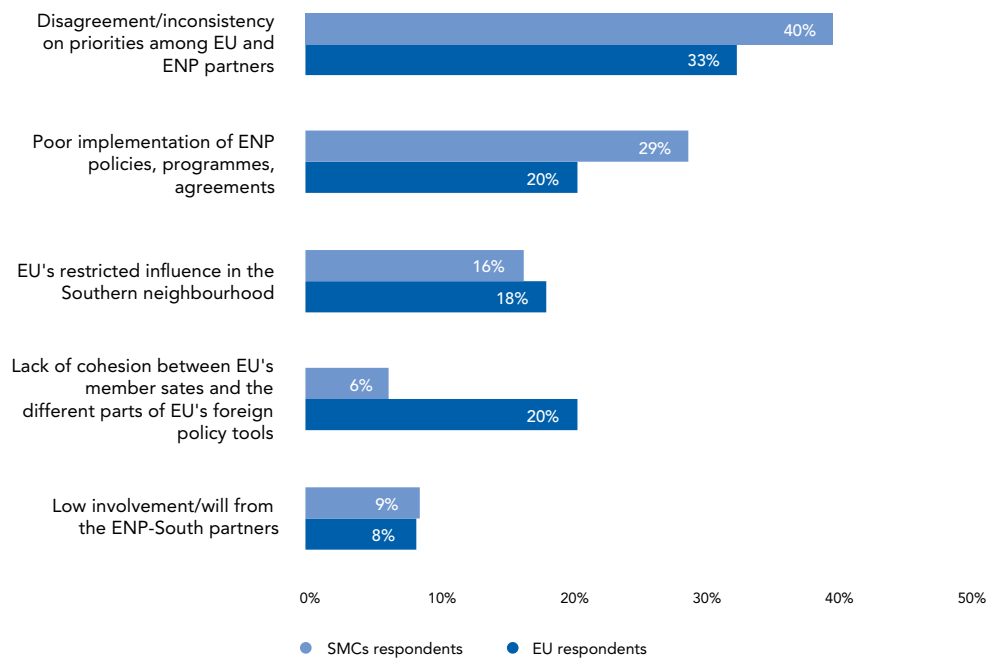
— Austrian respondent

As for the impact of neighbourhood policies on the movement of people, I considered it very high, particularly between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Regardless of the kind of movement or its legal names, the EU has been and is still pursuing a selective policy of migration, which creates new migration paths that are more dangerous and inappropriate for human rights.

— Algerian respondent

Question 1b was an open-ended question which allowed respondents to elaborate on the limitations of the ENP which were addressed in question 1 (graph 1). Categories developed from the answers highlighted two broad themes: disagreement on priorities among EU and ENP partners and poor implementation of ENP policies, programmes and/or agreements (graph 3). Interestingly, for EU respondents, the lack of cohesion between member states and the EU's foreign policy tools were also important elements that explain the low impact of the ENP.

Graph 3: Q.1b In general terms or in relation to the specific areas mentioned above, why do you think the impact has been limited? (categories developed from open-ended answers)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Below are some open-ended responses which elaborate on the key issues:

The ENP was essentially a generic European response to the EU's own post-enlargement challenges. In that sense, it did not provide a realistic long-term vision and is today a bit outdated. The ENP needs to include the post-revolution new generation while taking into consideration tech developments and economic needs. Moreover, the new approach needs to distinguish between the neighbouring regions of the EU as the interests of the eastern flank are becoming very different (rightly so) from those of the southern flank.

— Algerian respondent

The EU neither had the capabilities nor the political will and unity to pursue some of the ENP objectives whilst, at the same time, political regimes of target countries, engaged in consolidating their non-democratic rule, have been rather obstructive.

— German respondent

I think that influence, especially regarding human rights and conflicts, is sometimes weak. There are no real pressure tools to influence governments to spread the principles of human rights and democracy and raise the level of awareness among citizens regarding issues related to citizenship, rights and duties.

— Egyptian respondent

There is a fundamental divergence of interests at three levels that makes it difficult for the ENP to have a significant and sustained impact on the areas above. First, interests diverge within EU member states. Second, they also diverge between the EU and ENP partners. Third, they diverge within ENP partner countries, both within elites and most notably between elites and the local population.

— Italian respondent



The future of the European Neighbourhood Policy

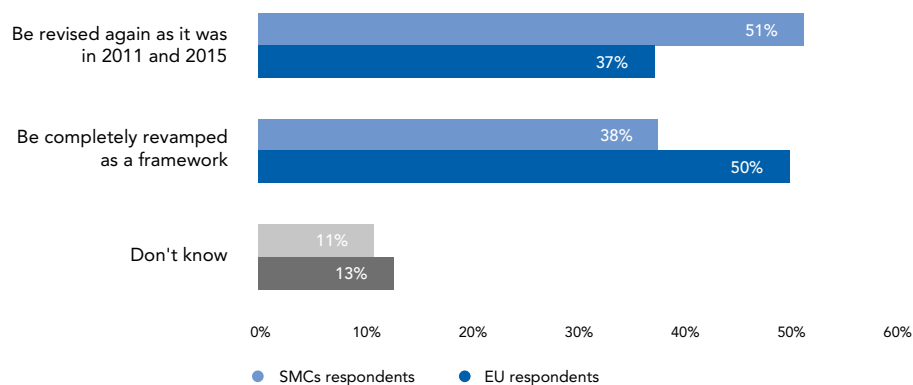
In the second block, respondents had to address two issues related to the future of the ENP. Firstly, what should be done to relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) (question 2). Secondly, if the design of the ENP should encompass both the Eastern and Southern dimension (question 3).

Main findings:

- Overall, respondents agree that the ENP needs to be transformed.
- Most EU respondents thought that it should be revamped, while most Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) respondents preferred a further revision in line with those conducted in 2011 and 2015.
- Socio-economic development and improving partnership structures should be the priority paradigms when revising or revamping the ENP.
- Managing migration and mobility, supporting democratisation and adaptation to climate change should also be central in a revised or revamped ENP.
- Most respondents do not want to keep the Eastern and Southern regions under the same ENP framework, but agreed that the Southern neighbourhood should take some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership.

In line with the findings deriving from question 1, the results of **question 2** demonstrated that respondents supported the idea of a major reform of the ENP, either in the form of a review or a complete overhaul (with an even split of opinion between these two options). The edifice of the ENP was revised and altered in 2011 and 2015, in response to changes in the region. A complete revamp of the ENP, a reconstruction of the framework, would require a reevaluation of its modus operandi but has not yet proved necessary. When asked whether the ENP should be revised or revamped each position received 44%. Interestingly, percentages changed when comparing results of EU and SMCs respondents. The former preferred revamping the ENP, while the latter were in favour of revising the ENP (graph 4).

Graph 4: Q.2 Since its inception in 2004, the ENP has been reviewed several times. The 2011, 2015 reviews, 2021 New Agenda for the Mediterranean. The ENP should:



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Comments of those respondents that preferred a revision of the ENP pointed to the need to renovate it by considering new needs and players in the region:

Given the climate and migration issues, the strategic partnership must be strengthened, in addition to the sub-Saharan European strategy and put at the same level as the Eastern Partnership.

— French respondent

The new era and the changes in actors that the region is facing needs to be addressed. The major players in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Iran and Turkey have adopted a different approach based on a post-petroleum economy. This has shifted the focus to a more open-borders approach, which increases the level of challenges while at the same time providing more benefits.

— Lebanese respondent

The renovation of the ENP has become a necessity due to new circumstances in the Mediterranean region. It is therefore useless to replace it with another instrument, which in the absence of will, would have the same fate as the ENP. The ENP, following the latest revisions, already includes the fundamental tools for a better result. They still need to be implemented effectively.

— Moroccan respondent

There has not been a co-ordinated effort by the EU or the EU members in their policy vis-a-vis the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. They have been better at undermining various political systems, such as those in Libya, Yemen, Syria, etc., than helping them to stabilise, let alone democratise.

— Turkish respondent

Respondents in favour of a complete revamp underlined the importance of the new balance of power and the need to change strategies in the region:

Due to the latest developments in the East, the ENP has ceased to exist. We should have a specific policy for the South, focusing on relations beyond what EU calls its neighbourhood and enhancing relations with other countries as well. It should recognise the importance of these countries for EU security and prosperity but through a real partnership. The ENP must not compromise, as has shamefully been the case over the last few years, on EU values, human rights and democratic principles. We should also develop relations with different segments of societies. We must look beyond national governments, on which we place too much focus but which have, in many cases, a contested legitimacy (based too often on repression).

— French respondent

With the challenges and changes the world is witnessing, and what we have concluded from previous experiences, it is preferable to develop a completely new framework that lives up to the aspirations of the peoples of both banks.

— Algerian respondent

We should be conscious of the possibility to bring in change from the outside and the limitations of the tools we have/want to use. We must build consensus/alignment between member states as there should only be one European neighbourhood policy and not one by the EU institutions and another 27 MS policies. Europe is only strong if it speaks with one voice that has clear criteria (in terms of values and interests) for engagement. EU institutions and MS must be flexible to be able to implement necessary changes.

— Austrian respondent

The evolution of the ENP over the years, from a focus on democratisation to stabilisation and then to the proposal of a New Agenda for the Mediterranean, suggests that a comprehensive overhaul of the framework may be necessary to adapt to changing regional dynamics, challenges, and priorities. Revamping the ENP could involve redefining its goals, strategies, and instruments to better address the complex and evolving needs of the European Union and its Southern neighbourhood partners.

— Egyptian respondent

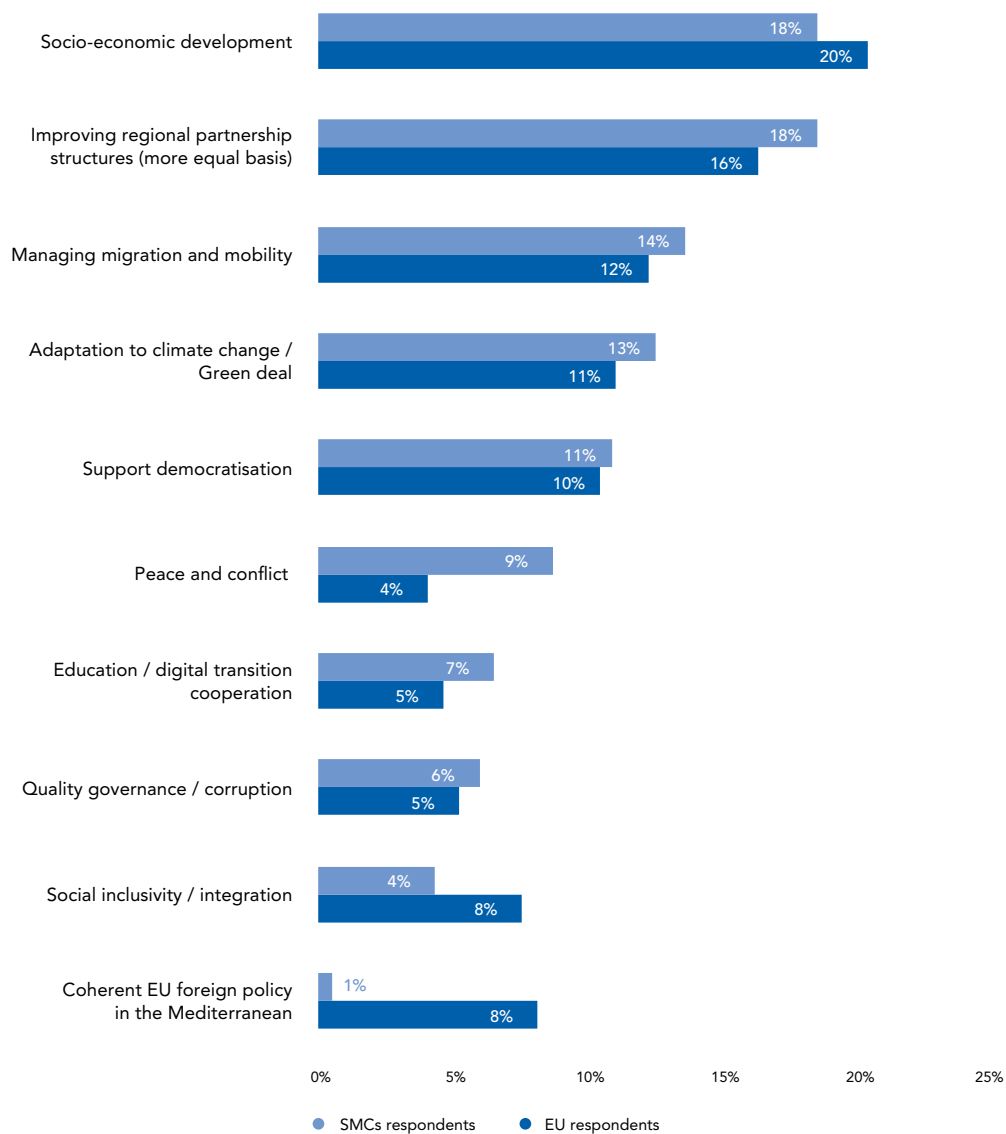
The triangle of factors: climate change, migration flows and diligence in output capabilities should be addressed.

— Greek respondent

As a continuation of question 2, participants were invited to identify, in an open-ended manner, what should be the focus of a revised or revamped ENP. The categories developed from these open-ended answers indicated that socio-economic development (19.4%) was the number one priority, shortly followed by improving regional partnership structures (17.4%). Managing migration and mobility (12.9%), adaptation to climate change (11.8%) and supporting democratisation (10.7%), were also of noticeable importance.

Breaking down the responses by geographical origin highlights a similar pattern of results but with some variations (graph 5). SMCs respondents were twice as likely (8.7%) to be concerned about peace and conflict as their EU counterparts (4.1%). On the other hand, EU respondents were notably interested (8.1%) in building a coherent EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean, whereas southern respondents displayed little to no interest in the issue (0.5%).

Graph 5: Q.2a What should be the new paradigm or the main focus of a revised or revamped ENP? (categories developed from open-ended answers)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

The focus needs to be geostrategic and geopolitical and clearly defined in terms of its necessity in the face of challenges from China, Russia, Turkey and others. The EU needs to have a clear and realistic focus, and try its best to meet benchmarks which have been defined and established with the Southern Med partners.

— Greek respondent

It should include an intertwined political and socio-economic development. It must consolidate the socio-economic advancement that was achieved by the partnership as well as enlarging political engagement among wider circles and sectors on both shores. This could be done through the following: 1) Creating spaces for Diaspora groups to help introduce EU normative power (if any!) in the Southern countries through partnerships with civil society organisations working together on both shores. 2) Creating spaces to encourage youth to take part in the design of the partnership's priorities according to their aspirations, views and ambitions. 3) Creating more platforms to give voices to the most vulnerable groups, in order to balance real political priorities with normative power priorities.

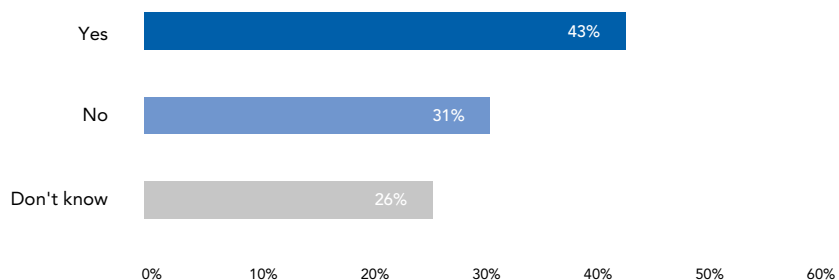
— Egyptian respondent

The whole concept of the “Neighbourhood” should be scrapped as, when it comes to the South, it does not make sense. Tools for development cooperation already exist at the European Commission level. A major investment to step up the EU's diplomatic and humanitarian action should instead be made as a basis to launch cooperation / support initiatives in the domains of energy, mobility, digital, health and disaster recovery.

— Italian respondent

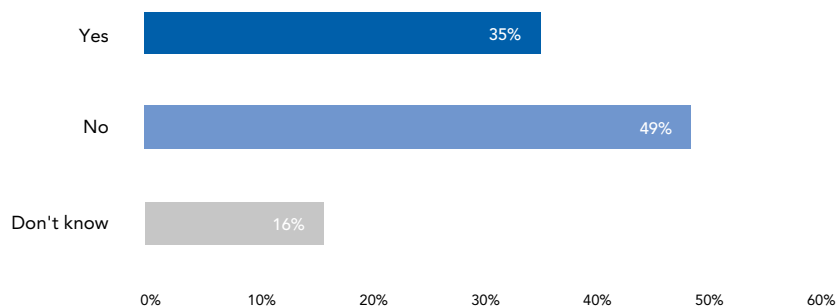
Question 3 focused on the geographical scope of the ENP and had two separate elements. In question 3a respondents were asked if the Southern neighbourhood should get some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership, while in question 3b respondents were asked about the need to keep the two regions (East and South) under the same ENP framework. Respondents, both EU and SMCs, agreed that the Southern neighbourhood should take inspiration from the Eastern Partnership (graph 6). The results also stated that the two regions, East and South, should be divided into separate frameworks (graph 7). Interestingly, in both questions, a third of respondents considered the contrary, and there was an important percentage of don't know answers, particularly on question 6 (taking inspiration from the Eastern partnership).

Graph 6: Q.3a Do you think the Southern Neighbourhood Policy should get some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Graph 7: Q.3b From both an EU and a Southern Neighbourhood perspective, do you see any merit in keeping the two regions under the same ENP framework?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In their comments, those who believed that the Southern neighbourhood should take inspiration from the East, further elaborated their ideas:

Given the challenges, it seems desirable to ensure a financial upgrade equivalent to the Eastern Partnership. At the same time, it is important to develop an approach less focused on the legal and regulatory framework (taking into account the political and institutional context) and more focused on a project logic and structuring initiatives.

— French respondent

Even though Southern neighbourhood countries hold no viable prospect of obtaining candidate status – thus severely limiting EU leverage – the Eastern example could still provide guidance in terms of deeper economic cooperation and the development of the TEN-T network to foster intra-regional connectivity and bridge barriers for trade.

— Italian respondent

The success of the Southern Neighbourhood Policy will depend on its ability to adapt and respond to the specific needs and circumstances of the countries in the Southern neighbourhood. Learning from the experiences and lessons of the Eastern Partnership can be valuable, but a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. Flexibility and adaptability should remain core principles of the ENP.

— Lebanese respondent

Countries from the Eastern Neighbourhood (EN) have the opportunity of becoming EU members states which seemed to be a great motivation for citizens and civic activists. This led to positive political changes and the strengthening of democratisation processes. While it is difficult to expect the creation a similar perspective for the Southern Neighbourhood (SN), this could serve as inspiration for initiating a special mechanism for the SN. This could encourage states to improve their transparency, citizens' influence on political decisions and embark on the path of democratisation.

— Polish respondent

It is worth looking across sectors to find what kind of inspiration the Eastern Neighbourhood can provide. In any case, relations with the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood are prioritised by many EU member states for a variety of reasons. I think the most important factors are, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine underlined, geopolitics and the sense of a “Europeanness” of the countries in Eastern Europe. These factors could even open the door to future accession. Something unimaginable in the case of North African states.

— Greek respondent

Those who argued, on the other hand, that the Southern neighbourhood does not need inspiration from the Eastern neighbourhood expanded on their reasons why:

Given the geopolitical, socio-economic, and every-changing migratory flows in the Southern Mediterranean region, the EU needs a tailor-made approach for the Southern neighbourhood policy. The EU should take full stock of the needs and the nature of collaboration with southern neighbours. The EU should reconsider the scale of 'shared responsibility' with southern neighbours, as well as making clear the gains its southern neighbours could make in its 'mutually beneficial' partnerships.

— Moroccan respondent

The Southern neighbourhood could always take inspiration on how to progress more quickly, despite its lack of resources (just compare Morocco and Ukraine before the war), but it has not demonstrated an appetite for many years. It is simply not ready to assume EU values and principles in real-life commitments, therefore, any inspiration can only create additional sets of disappointments.

— Polish respondent

My feeling is that the EU is less and less concerned with the Southern neighbourhood. Maybe because it is also helpless in the face of corruption, dictatorship, and deeply rooted issues. That is why I say again: the economy should be the primary area of focus. Improve people's lives, improve economies, so that things can change.

— Lebanese respondent

Reviewing constitutive principles of the ENP

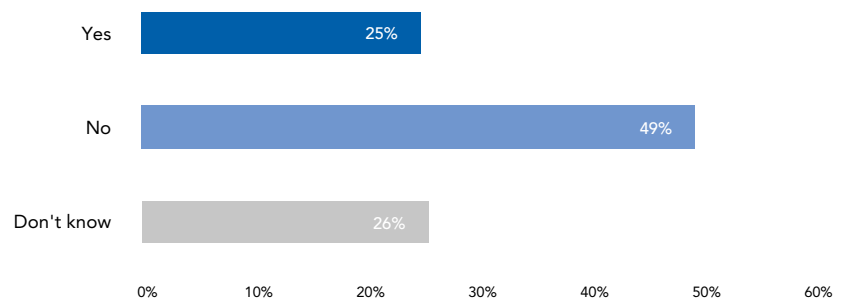
The third block of the EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey aimed to assess the application of constitutive principles of the ENP: differentiation, “incentive-based approach” (more for more) and joint-ownership. It also sought to collect respondents’ views on how the relationship between the ENP and the UfM, as regional mechanisms, should be developed.

Main findings:

- There is a consistent consensus amongst respondents: they believe that the constitutive principles of the ENP have not been effectively applied.
- At the same time, a large majority of respondents consider that these principles are still valid and should remain in any future revision of the ENP.
- Respondents clearly agree that the overlap between the regional dimension of the ENP and UfM causes confusion and that mechanisms must be simplified. They do not, however, see the need in replacing the ENP with the UfM as a regional framework.

Question 4 was designed to capture opinion on the application and utility of the differentiation principle. Under the differentiation principle, the EU wanted to recognise the different aspirations of partner countries in their relations with the EU, offering them tailor-made partnerships. Results displayed a consistent agreement among respondents, namely that the differentiation principle has not been effectively applied (graph 8). 'Don't know' even outranked 'Yes' responses.

Graph 8: Q.4a Do you think the EU has applied this principle of differentiation effectively?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In their comments respondents expanded on their views, vis-à-vis the (in)effectiveness of the differentiation principle:

Yes, differentiation has been applied effectively, even though I would add that the 'tailor-made partnerships' are highly imbalanced, as the EU is both the model and the tailor. As a result, differentiation only matters insofar as partner countries want to deepen their relations with the EU but are content that is done in a way that is overwhelmingly shaped by the EU.

— Italian respondent

The EU has made significant efforts to apply the principle of differentiation effectively within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This approach acknowledges that partner countries have different levels of ambition, interests, and capacities when it comes to their relations with the EU. These are some reasons why the EU's application of differentiation can be considered effective.

— Moroccan respondent

The tailor-made partnership arrangements are offered and shaped according to the “wish list” or “demands list” put forward by the higher echelons of the state in the individual countries. Countrywide consultation of the public opinion (be it a survey, be it a referendum) is almost never practiced. Therefore, the EU apparently offers tailor-made partnerships to some extent, but not effectively or satisfactorily due to being drawn up without full diversity, inclusion, and equity.

— Turkey respondent

ENP differentiation recognises the aspirations of different countries, but this does not necessarily open collaboration. For example, with agricultural trade exchanges and agreements, conditions (e.g. social and human rights) in production systems are not at an acceptable level for the EU.

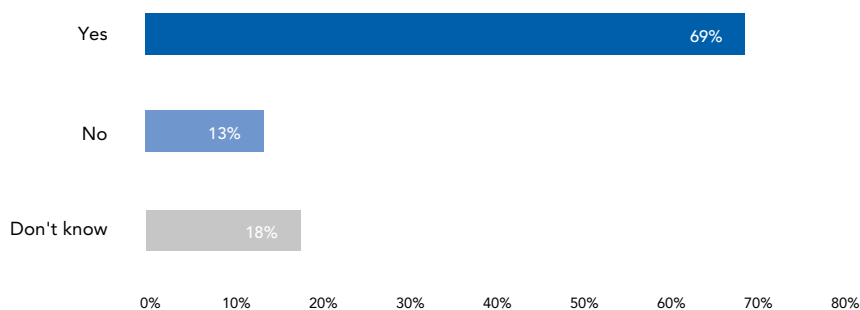
— Spanish respondent

The EU may face budgetary and resource constraints, which may limit its ability to provide adequate support to all partner countries. It is, however, also worth noting that some partner countries have benefited from effective differentiation, with tailor-made partnerships that met their specific needs.

— Moroccan respondent

The results of **question 4b** showed, however, that the belief in an ineffective application does not imply a refusal of the differentiation principle. 70% of participants considered that differentiation still serves a purpose (graph 9) in recognising the different aspirations of partner countries in their relations with the EU.

Graph 9: Q.4b Do you think differentiation still serves a purpose?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In their comments, respondents explained their arguments on the differentiation principle:

This principle allows the EU to tailor its engagement strategies to better address the unique needs and aspirations of each country. However, it is crucial that differentiation is applied consistently and transparently, with a firm commitment to upholding the EU's core values of democracy, human rights, and rule of law.

— Lebanese respondent

It provides flexibility, acknowledges political realities, and can help foster cooperation based on the specific needs and aspirations of each neighbour. The EU must, however, continually assess and adapt its approach to ensure that differentiation contributes effectively to the overarching goals of the ENP and the EU's relations with its neighbours.

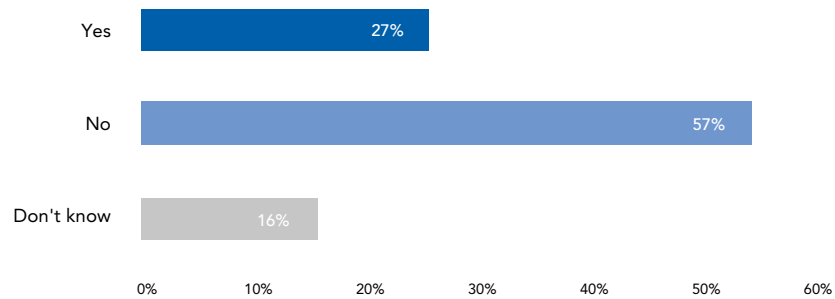
— Moroccan respondent

Differentiation in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) can still serve a purpose, but its effectiveness depends on various factors, including evolving geopolitical dynamics, the specific goals of the EU, and the willingness of partner countries to engage with the EU on their own terms.

— Jordanian respondent

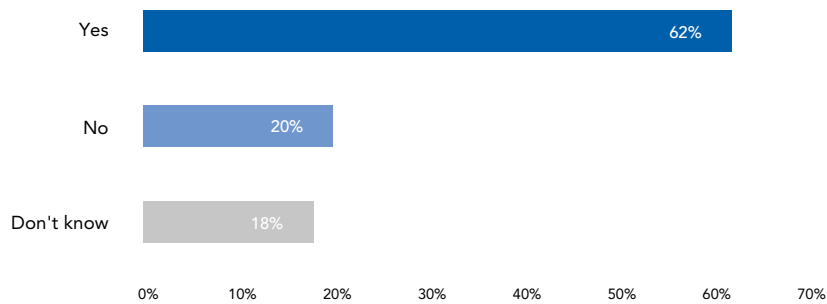
Question 5 was focused on another ENP principle, the “incentive-based approach” (more for more), under which the EU wanted to develop stronger partnerships with those neighbours that progressed in political and economic reform. As with the differentiation principle, a pattern emerges: its application has not been effective (graph 10), but there is a belief that it should remain as a valid principle when revising or revamping the ENP (graph 11).

Graph 10: Q.5a Do you think that the application of the “incentive-based approach” (More for more) has indeed fostered political and economic reform in Southern Mediterranean countries?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Graph 11: Q.5b Should this principle remain an underlying principle of a revised policy of the EU towards its Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In the open comments respondents further elaborated as to why the incentive-based approach has been unsuccessful:

The approach has faced challenges because there is a perception that conditionality is a mechanism for interfering in domestic affairs. Its impact can also be limited by external factors such as regional conflicts and economic crises. Therefore, while it has yielded some positive results, the “More for more” approach alone may not be sufficient to drive comprehensive and sustained reforms in the Southern Mediterranean region.

— Lebanese respondent

It failed because the incentives are not measurable and accountable. The incentives are reliant on elites rather than a broader set of stakeholders in each country.

— Cyprus respondent

We do not see any notable change for us in civil society: exchanges, their financing and development programmes are done essentially and almost exclusively with governments; exchanges have been directed at governments, while ignoring civil society. These closed off exchanges have excluded civil society from cooperation and financing opportunities with the EU.

— Algerian respondent

The EU repeats patterns of the past without being aware of the paradigm shift and the penetration of new actors that do not require conditionality and can match and/or surpass its offer. Maybe the incentive-based approach was outdated.

— Spanish respondent

From the very beginning, conditionality has been problematic as it has not been implemented in a coherent way and it has created unmet expectations. At the same time, it has been very difficult for those countries that were taking their first steps towards reform. This, however, does not mean that conditionality should be scrapped.

— Italian respondent

Open comments for the incentive-based approach outlined several arguments for keeping it in the ENP:

The EU should always try to remain open to closer relations with those countries that are truly interested in forging such relations.

— Irish respondent

Its effectiveness depends on balanced implementation, transparency, and strong monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the incentives genuinely lead to meaningful reforms. A revised policy should maintain this principle while addressing the shortcomings and challenges of its application, emphasising a balanced approach that combines incentives with constructive engagement and dialogue to foster sustainable change in the region.

— Lebanese respondent

I believe that there are some principles, such as democracy and human rights, that the EU should follow and push for, as much as possible, in third countries. Thus, conditionality could be useful in this sense. The EU will, however, have to compete with other financial assistants that will be more flexible in this regard. The EU, therefore, may need to recalibrate and be prepared to offer more for less conditions, if it wants to compete in this arena.

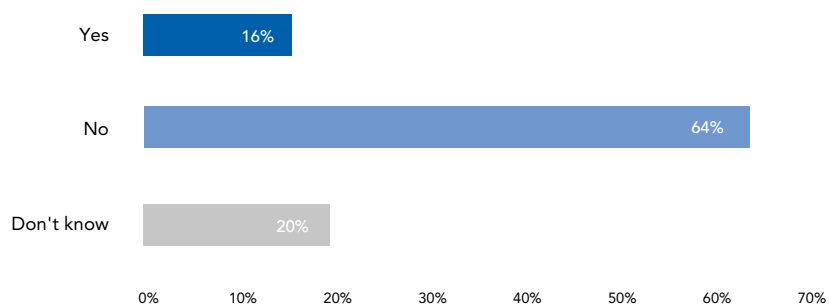
— Belgian respondent

It is an effective behavioural modification tool that can yield constructive structural changes, theoretically speaking. But we should improve our protocols/procedures for applying it, lifting it, and ensuring cohesion behind it before we use it again, otherwise all it does is make Europe look weak and dictatorial.

— Libyan respondent

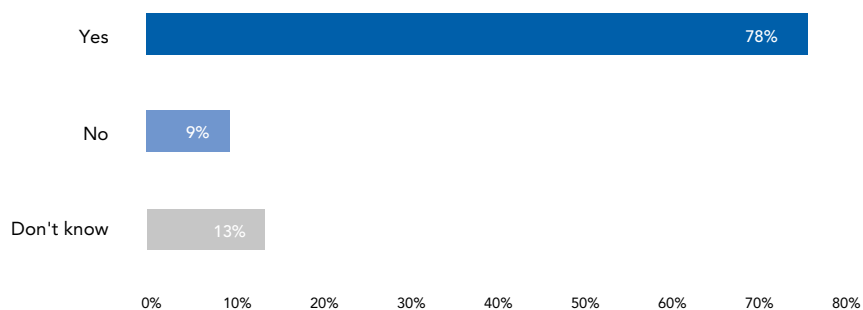
Question 6 assessed the joint-ownership principle which, based on the awareness of shared values and common interests, aims to be unimposing in terms of the priorities and conditions of ENP partners. When asked whether they felt the ENP is based on a relationship of co-ownership with the Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) a substantial majority of respondents (almost 70%) said 'no' (graph 12). As with the former questions on the ENP principles, this result is not a refusal of joint-ownership: respondents considered that it should be present in EU-SMCs relations. Indeed, a vast majority (80% of respondents) think that this principle should continue guiding the EU's efforts in redefining its approach vis-à-vis Southern Mediterranean neighbours (graph 13). It was, however, deemed ineffective.

Graph 12: Q.6a Do you think EU Southern Mediterranean countries feel they co-own the ENP?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Graph 13: Q.6b Do you think the principle of joint ownership should continue guiding the EU's efforts in redefining its approach vis a vis its Southern Mediterranean neighbours?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In their open comments, respondents clarified why SMCs perceive that co-ownership has not been successfully applied by the ENP:

I think some southern countries suffer from weak institutions or organisational capacity and lack sustainable policies combined with clear visions and strategies, so they feel and act like reacting or interacting rather than sharing or co-owning. It needs some kind of assistance, follow-up and encouragement, if not guidance, regarding administrative and organisational aspects. This would lead to effective organised and well-prepared policies and priorities on both sides.

— Egyptian respondent

There is a feeling across the southern flank that the EU acts in a paternalistic way with its partners. The ENP's application needs revision in a way that allows southern countries to speak for themselves and engage more productively in designing Euro-Med cooperation.

— Algerian respondent

I'm not familiar enough with examples where joint ownership has led to concrete results. Institutionally, I heard positive remarks about it. As the EU is such a cumbersome institution, I think it will be rare – but most useful – for a southern country to see how joint ownership translates into action.

— Israeli respondent

When given space to provide open answers on the continuation of joint-ownership, respondents highlighted its value for accommodating diverse perspectives, objectives and expectations.

It is the only way for the approach to have a chance to succeed. That said, the EU must be honest in that it has its own goals on which it is not willing to negotiate. Unfulfilled (and misguided) expectations are one of the main sources of discontent with the ENP in the SMCs.

— Polish respondent

If truly acted upon, it can reduce sentiments of eurocentrism/post-colonialism. It may stimulate more strategic thinking among partner countries.

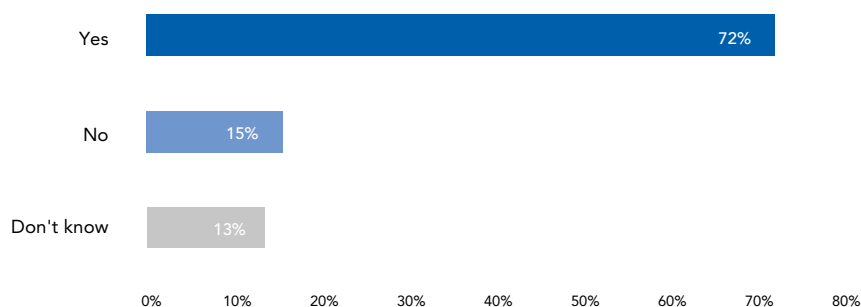
— Israeli respondent

The perception of a common Euro-Mediterranean destiny is essential to the renewal of the Mediterranean basin, but given the severely degraded local situations, we are starting from scratch.

— French respondent

Closing this block, **question 7a** was designed to identify if the EU should seek to simplify mechanisms to avoid the confusion caused by the overlap between the regional dimension of the ENP and the UfM. Respondents clearly agree (72%) on the need to simplify these mechanisms (graph 14).

Graph 14: Q.7a The overlap between the regional dimension of the ENP and the UfM introduces unnecessary confusion, and the EU should seek to simplify its mechanisms.



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

By simplifying mechanisms, the EU can avoid unnecessary redundancy and allocate resources more effectively to achieve its objectives in the region. Simplification also allows for a more focused and impactful approach. It enables the EU to concentrate its efforts on key priorities and areas where it can make a real difference, rather than spreading resources thinly across multiple platforms.

— Lebanese respondent

When reading EU documents, it is not clear who are the main actors of Euro-Med cooperation and through which mechanisms cooperation should take place.

— Italian respondent

The rise of the ENP as the main instrument for EU foreign relations, with its Southern neighbours, has entailed a shift of emphasis from region-building to bilateralism. While some Mediterranean countries thrived outside the constrictions of the regional framework, the shift left the Europeans without a clear vision for the area.

— Algerian respondent

The Union for the Mediterranean is political, institutional, and diplomatic. The specific tools of the ENP, however, are pragmatic and practical. They fund concrete actions that contribute to reducing inequalities. They propose solutions to common challenges and improve the quality of the lives of Mediterranean citizens in small positive ways: help with training, employment and starting businesses.

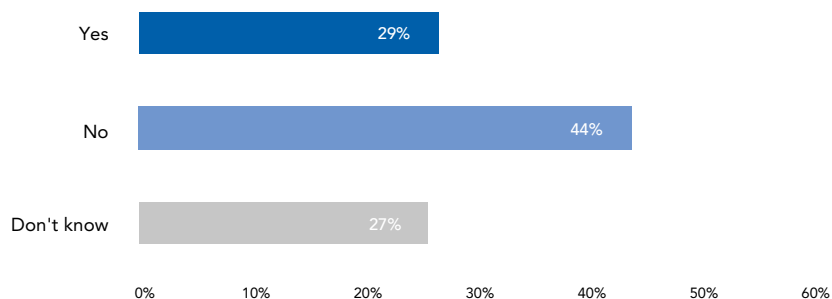
— French respondent

People are already confused as to the relationship between the EU and member states. Having multiple overlapping forums just exaggerates that confusion, and it pushes a regression towards bilateral relationship building in place of the multilateral forums that such bodies intend to build.

— Libyan respondent

When asked, in **question 7b**, if the UfM should replace the ENP as a regional framework, near a half of respondents (44%) considered that this was not necessary. Interestingly, 27% of the answers indicated uncertainty. Almost the same percentage of those that wanted the ENP to be removed as a regional framework (see graph 15).

Graph 15: Q.7b The EU should get rid of the ENP as a regional framework and further invests in the UfM as a regional mechanism.



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In the open comments, respondents offered a variety of opinions about regional framework structures, be it the UfM or the ENP.

The decision to eliminate the ENP as a regional framework and further invest in the UfM as a regional mechanism is a policy choice that requires careful consideration and negotiation among all stakeholders involved.

— Moroccan respondent

The EU should consider investing further in both the UfM as a regional mechanism while also keeping the ENP as a separate framework. Consolidating efforts within the UfM could lead to a more coherent and streamlined approach to addressing the complex challenges and opportunities in the Mediterranean region. This move would signify the EU's commitment to a more unified and effective engagement strategy in its Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood.

— Lebanese respondent

Rather organise a clear sharing of roles with the means of a policy specific to an OECD function of the UfM; otherwise make the UfM the instrument of the European Commission for the regional ENP which would see it appropriate the countries of the South.

— French respondent

The UfM has been using more tangible tools to approach the Mediterranean partnership. It is less theoretical and more responsive to the developments on the ground. It is, therefore, equipped with the best tools to generate creative solutions and plan for co-owned policies. From these incremental steps, macro-level strategies should be designed; through a bottom-up approach not a top-down approach.

— Egyptian respondent

At the core of the ENP: political dialogue, trade and mobility

The fourth block of the EuroMeSCo Euromed Survey aimed to assess elements such as political dialogue, trade and mobility, which have been at the core of the ENP during the past 20 years. It delved in questions on policy revision and restructuring.

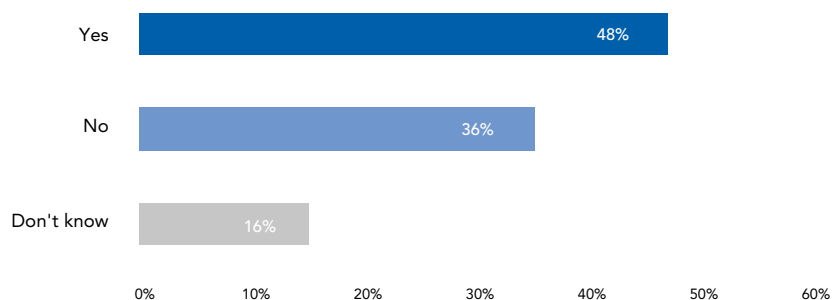
Main findings:

- Almost half of the SMCs respondents answered favourably when asked if the Action Plans and Partnership Priorities reflected their country's needs and challenges.
- When assessing if Action Plans and Partnership Priorities reflected country needs and challenges there is a clear trend that differentiates Mashreq and Maghreb countries. Largely positive responses from the former and a differing, more nuanced outlook from the latter.
- At the regional level, 41% of overall respondents considered that needs and challenges were not reflected in the Partnership Priorities. There was a breakdown of consensus here where EU respondents maintained a negative perception at the regional level, while Southern respondents were more positive.
- Most respondents were in favour of maintaining a regular calendar for political dialogue between the EU and its partners, under the banner of the ENP. Strong support was also given to introducing more flexibility into the scheduling of these meetings.
- 36% of those polled considered that the change introduced in 2015, regarding progress reports, was unfortunate, and that the EU should keep issuing reports regarding "progress" made by its partners. 26% indicated that they didn't know.

- DCFTAs are still considered the best paradigm to advance trade relations between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners.
- There is no clear answer as to whether the South should continue pushing for signing agreements, as has been (unsuccessfully) the case, or define a new approach for mobility cooperation.

Question 8 aimed to investigate whether the ENP was focusing on the real needs, challenges and priorities of countries involved. Forming the background of this question were bilateral negotiations, especially financial assistance, that focused on partner action plans (until 2015) and partner priorities (since 2015). The first question only asked Southern Mediterranean partners (SMP) to respond and wanted to know about the specific impact on the respondent's country. Almost half of the respondents (graph 16) believed that the Action Plans and Partnership Priorities reflected their country's needs and challenges.

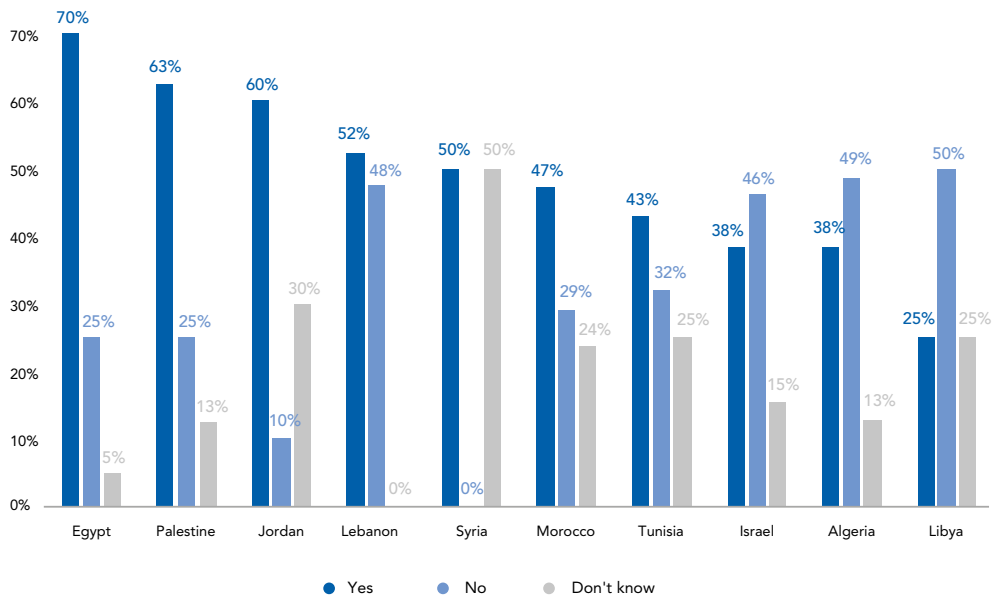
Graph 16: Q.8a Do you think the Priorities for Action/Partnership Priorities identified in these documents reflect the real needs, challenges, and priorities of your country? (only SMP respondents)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

When analysing the results by country there is a clear trend that differentiates the Mashreq and Maghreb. 'Yes' answers were above 50% in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon (graph 17) while percentages were below 50% in Maghreb countries and Israel. In certain cases, such as Algeria and Libya, as well as in Israel, respondents believed that the real needs and challenges of their countries were not prioritised in the ENP Partnership Priorities (or equivalent Action Plans).

Graph 17: Q.8a Do you think the Priorities for Action/Partnership Priorities identified in these documents reflect the real needs, challenges, and priorities of your country? (only SMP respondents)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Many of the comments offered different areas for improvement that the ENP could prioritise:

The entire vision of the southern flank's priorities needs to be re-assessed. The protest movements, COVID-19 crisis and ongoing geopolitical shifts must be taken into consideration.

— Algerian respondent

In Morocco the priorities only partly reflect the real needs and challenges. Possibly, there is a problem in impact evaluation. I'm not sure if the impact of the sponsored projects has been evaluated as rigorously and as strictly as it should have been.

— Moroccan respondent

It surprises me that these are the "real" needs in these countries. This may be what the EU thinks is real. How is it that none of these countries need food security, respect for sovereignty or independence? The EU should clarify that these are the priorities of its ruling partners; people have different needs.

— Tunisian respondent

All of these are important, but going forward, international trade should be a priority. It should be addressed from different perspectives, as international trade can pose opportunities to all the relevant stakeholders but at the same time it comes with its own set of challenges.

— Lebanese respondent

While they may not always perfectly capture every aspect of the Palestinian context, these documents are designed to provide a framework for targeted and effective EU support that aligns with Palestine's development aspirations. Ongoing dialogue and flexibility are key to ensuring that these priorities remain relevant and responsive to changing circumstances.

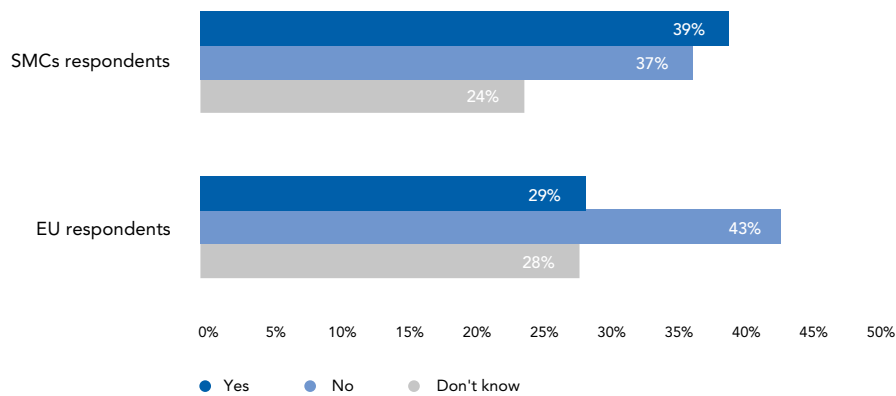
— Palestinian respondent

Effort should be more carefully directed towards specific and important sectors, whilst also being increased. It needs to focus on youth, poverty, job creation, food and water security, education, mobility and exchanging experiences and best practices in different sectors.

— Egyptian respondent

Question 8b proposed the same question but opened it up to all respondents and asked if, at the regional level, Partnership Priorities reflected the real needs, challenges and priorities of the countries involved. 41% of respondents considered that their needs and challenges were not reflected in the Partnership Priorities, while 32% considered that they were reflected. 28% did not have a clear idea and chose the 'Don't know' option. Breaking down the results by geographical area, graph 18 offers us a different picture. EU respondents were markedly negative in their views, while those from the SMCs were marginally more positive than negative.

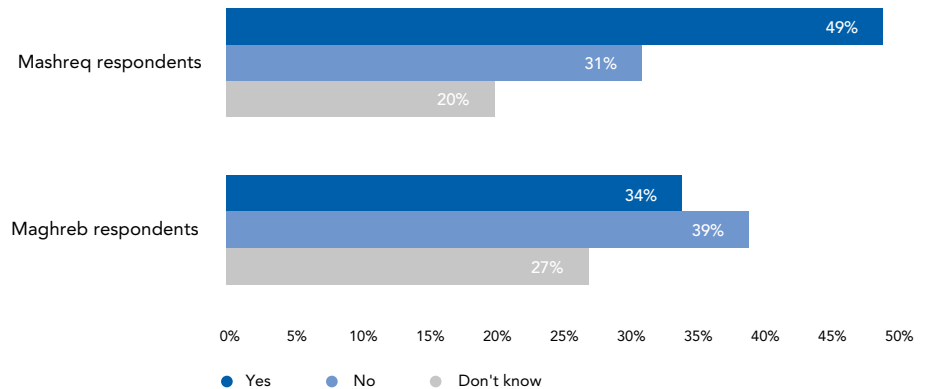
Graph 18: Q.8b At a regional level, do you think the Partnership Priorities reflect the real needs, challenges, and priorities of the countries involved? (all respondents)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

Interestingly, the positive results of SMCs respondents were due to Mashreq answers as 49% considered that Partnership Priorities reflect their real needs and challenges, while 31% considered that they do not. Maghreb respondents, on the contrary, highlighted that for them, there is no correspondence between priorities and their real needs and challenges (39%). Only 34% of those polled believed that there has been relevant prioritisation.

Graph 19: Q.8b At a regional level, do you think the Partnership Priorities reflect the real needs, challenges, and priorities of the countries involved? (all respondents)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

These are some open comments on how Partnership Priorities reflect real needs and challenges at the regional level:

The Partnership Priorities are much better focused on the priorities of the two sides (EU and partner countries). Despite this, the tendency to a dispersion of efforts is a constant challenge.

— Irish respondent

The big issues are migration and refugees. In terms of politics, it is sometimes deplorable to see how far the EU is from doing what needs to be done.

— Lebanese respondent

If the EU decided to take a real stand on human rights in authoritarian countries it would not be able to sign Partnership Priority documents with their governments. I don't see this happening, because the partners have the EU over a barrel on the migration issue. So, the Partnership Priorities are good for governments, less so for societies. The question is the extent to which the EU can live with this.

— German respondent

Other comments on Partnership Priorities described some elements that, according to respondents, should be present at the regional level:

Europe needs to define its own interests in order to explain priorities to its partners. The EU may need to address why other models (Russian or Chinese) are working within the region.

— Spanish respondent

Priorities should be developed in direct consultation with civil society, grassroots groups, NGOs and later with governments.

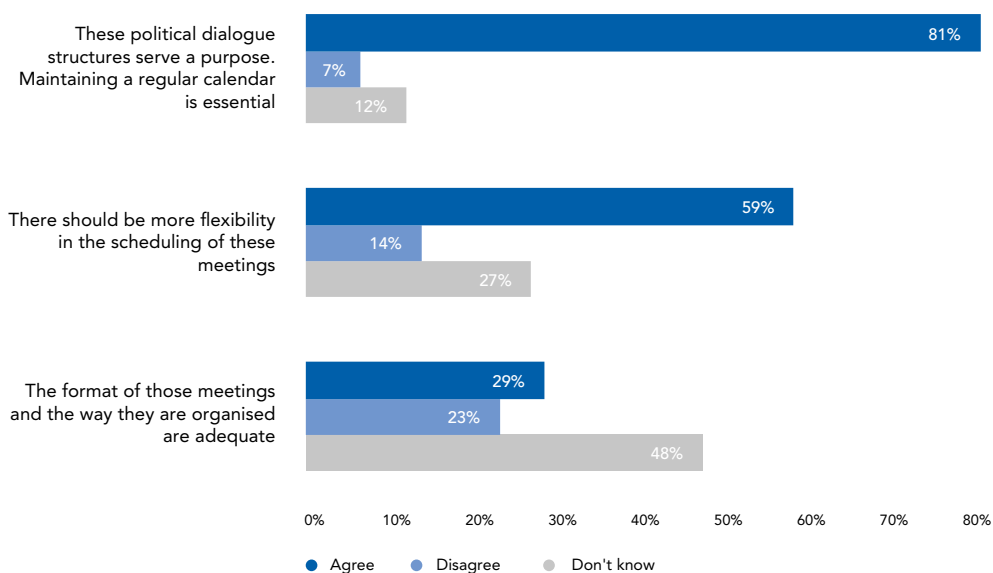
— Palestinian respondent

Security support is insufficient (Morocco is the first African border of the European Union), hence there is a need for better collaboration (return migration, legal migration, human rights, support for the diaspora, etc.).

— Moroccan respondent

Questions 9 and 10 were focused on two specific tools related to the functioning of the ENP. The first, in **question 9**, was focused on the articulation of the political and policy dialogue of the EU with its partners under the ENP. Respondents clearly agree on maintaining present dialogue structures and its calendar (81% of the answers), although strong support was also given to increasing flexibility when scheduling these meetings (59%). When asked to evaluate if the format of the meetings and their organisation are adequate, 48% of respondents answered, 'Don't know'. While almost one third believed they were adequate, 23% did not (graph 20).

Graph 20: Q.9 Do you agree/disagree with these statements?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

More qualitative opinions were outlined in the opened commentaries:

The meetings are highly bureaucratic in nature. Making them more operational is a constant challenge, reflecting the weight of the bureaucracies that confront each other in these meetings.

— Irish respondent

On the one hand regular meetings at official and ministerial level can help to maintain a good momentum, or at least force officials and politicians to keep their finger on the proverbial pulse and measure the progress of relations. Yet routine meetings may not stimulate new ideas and initiatives. Perhaps the EU should differentiate between routine official level meetings and special ministerial level meetings to initiate new initiatives. It may give politicians a stimulus to initiate steps towards the EU.

— Israeli respondent

Although the calendar should be maintained, the EU is not sufficiently perceived as a political player because it has no teeth and competes against its own member states. Thus, these meetings look more like consultations.

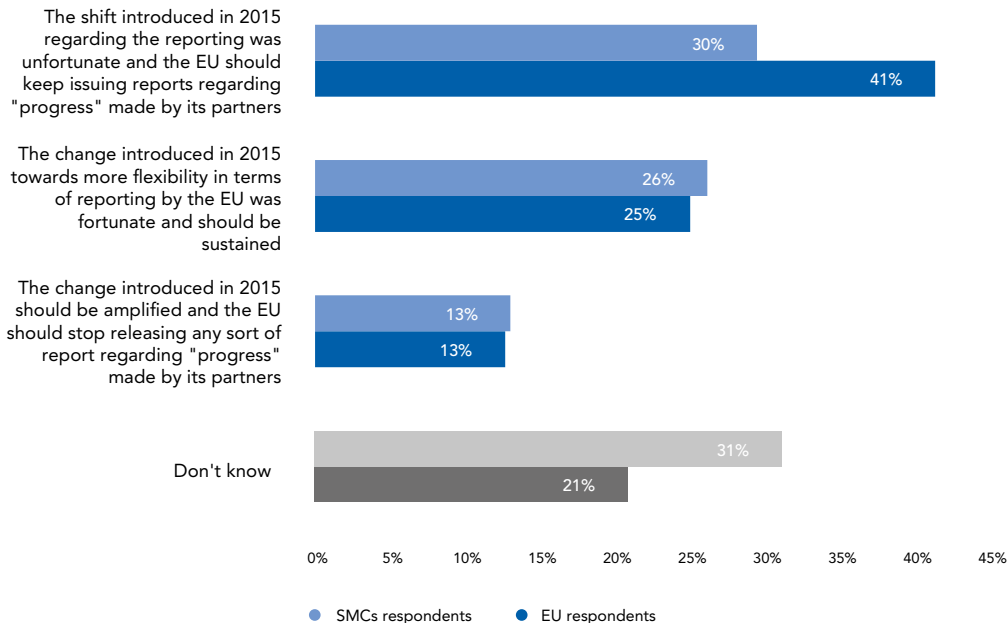
— Lebanese respondent

Diversity in participation should be available at all meetings. Where possible, the meetings should be accessible (e.g., as a webcast) to members of the public and civil society organisations in all the respective countries.

— Turkish respondent

Question 10 focused on the practice of reporting the progress of agreed policies between the EU and its ENP partners. In 2015 the reporting framework changed from a model of a set of regular progress reports on all countries, towards a less prescriptive style of assessment. 36% believed indeed it was unfortunate and thought that the EU should keep issuing reports regarding "progress" made by its partners. On the other hand, 24% thought it was a good change. EU respondents were more critical of the new reporting framework (graph 21).

Graph 21: Q.10 When the ENP was crafted in 2004, it was established that the European Commission would "report periodically on progress accomplished" towards agreed priorities. With the 2015 review of the ENP, this systematic model of annual progress reports changed. Since then, there is no standardized practice of reporting. Do you think that (select only one option):



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In the open comments some respondents elaborated on their answers:

It is necessary to have evaluation tools but in reality, they are only interesting if they are accompanied by a real political analysis and proposals for action by EU countries to promote a climate of confidence.

— French respondent

It is important to have some kind of regular evaluation, such a document can be used to build upon. It does not need to be done annually, it could be, for example, every two years. Clarity should be key in the document: the way it is written, who participated in it, what are its purposes, and how it can be useful and applied. These, among other questions, should be clarified.

— Egyptian respondent

It is essential to provide more transparency and accountability in EU policy. The EU should go back to the process of regular reporting (maybe not annually, but bi-annually).

— Polish respondent

If the ENP aims to promote not only a partnership but a co-ownership of the programme, EU reporting should follow different MS approaches and even regional aggregations, becoming even more flexible.

— Italian respondent

Regular reporting is good, as are standards for that reporting. It's treated by many low-level embassy staff/diplomats as a pain but it forces a regular review of policy and impact, and keeps these standards at the forefront of the minds of implementing officers, which is useful.

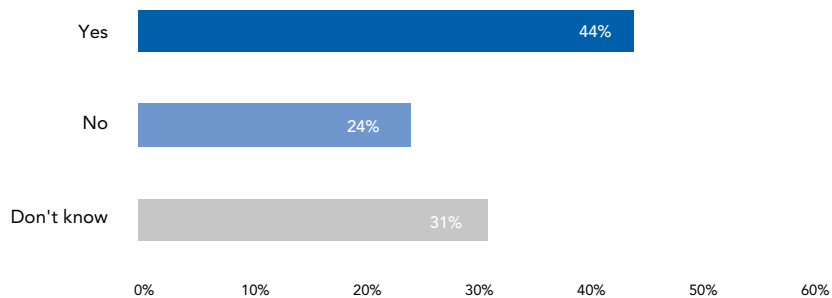
— Libyan respondent

This question conflates two issues: regular reporting, which in my view should be maintained also with respect to transparency towards EU citizens; and reporting framed in terms of "progress", which examines partner countries in terms of how they meet expectations and priorities overwhelmingly shaped by the EU. In my view, regular reporting should happen, but it should focus on more general developments, rather than becoming an exercise on how virtuous or otherwise ENP partner countries are.

— Italian respondent

In **question 11**, participants of the survey were asked about the deep comprehensive free trade areas (DCFTAs), since trade integration has been a key objective of ENP. DCFTAs, essentially free-trade zones with access to the EU Single Market, have been implemented by the EU in the Eastern Neighbourhood since 2014, but the signature of similar agreements has not been possible with its Southern neighbours. When asked if DCFTAs are still the best paradigm to advance better trade relations between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners, 44% of respondents stated that they are (graph 22). A notable 31% chose 'Don't know' while a quarter were unconvinced by the DCFTAs.

Graph 22: Q.11 Do you think DCFTAs are still the best paradigm to advance better trade relations between the EU and its Southern Mediterranean partners?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In the open-ended comments respondents identified some alternative options:

Comprehensive free trade agreements are considered a form of integration in the global economy and one of the modern means of cooperation between countries. They create blocs that can coexist and cope with global economic changes.

— Algerian respondent

DCFTA was tailored to specific countries (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) which are distinct to Southern Mediterranean countries. The general principle may perhaps hold but adaptation will be needed.

— Spanish respondent

DCFTAs applicability to the Southern Mediterranean region may require careful consideration. The EU should assess the unique circumstances and challenges of its Southern neighbours and adapt its approach accordingly. Customised agreements, development-oriented strategies, and inclusivity in the negotiation process could offer alternative paths to foster better trade relations and support economic growth and stability in the region.

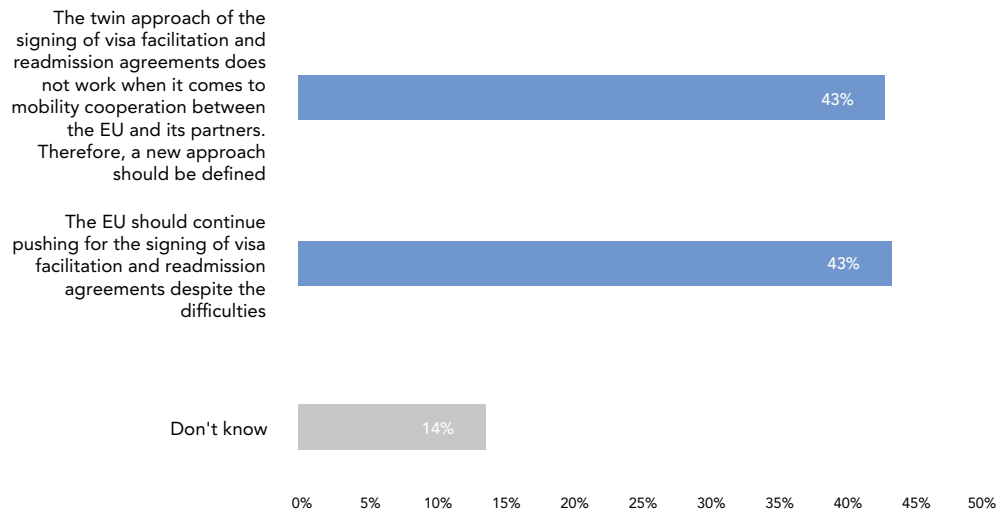
— Lebanese respondent

I would prefer to say 'probably' but this depends on how the EU approaches this issue. The DCFTA negotiations have run into a wall because the EU remains committed to limiting access in sectors where the partners have comparative advantages. This is a political decision and there are reasons for it. But as long as this is the case the DCFTA will not go ahead.

— German respondent

Question 12 was focused on mobility. The EU has concluded visa liberalisation and signed visa facilitation and readmission agreements with almost all its Eastern neighbours, but contrary to the Eastern Partnership, visa liberalisation is not on the agenda with any Southern neighbours and the twin track approach visa facilitation/readmission agreements has not prospered either. The survey addressed two options related to visa facilitation and readmission. Respondents did not show a clear preference towards either alternative. The same percentage was given to "Continue pushing for signing agreements" (43%) as for "Defining a new approach to mobility cooperation" (graph 23).

Graph 23: Q.12 Given this situation, do you think that (select only one option):



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14th Euromed Survey

In the open comments the challenges of finding a balanced policy on readmissions and visa facilitation were highlighted by respondents:

What is striking is that the European Union does not hide its intentions in trying to persuade the countries concerned to accept its policy directions in the field of combating illegal immigration. It is also open about its political orientation in the field of facilitating visas. The two policies are selective.

— Algerian respondent

The question of readmission requires far more leverage than what can be achieved with visa facilitation. The range of measures to elicit real cooperation on readmission should be expanded to include “sanctions” as well as “rewards”. At the same time the insistence on the readmission of 3rd country nationals is unfair on the transit countries and should be dealt with differently.

— Irish respondent

The EU approach is seen by many Southern countries as a method to solve its migration problem without due regard to the concerns of Southern countries. A new approach must be just and balanced.

— Egyptian respondent

A new approach could focus more on education and training linked to visa facilitation in order to tackle irregular migration flows. After a positive result in that direction, readmission agreements could be tackled.

— Italian respondent

