

# INTRODUCTION

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Following European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's call for a more focused approach to the EU's wider neighbourhood –particularly the Mediterranean– the European Commission has established a new Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA), under the leadership of Commissioner Dubravka Šuica. This new body is tasked with steering and shaping the future goals of EU-Mediterranean policy. To that end, the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partner countries are discussing a **New Pact for the Mediterranean**, aimed at creating a comprehensive framework to address the region's complex challenges through jointly agreed priority areas.

Within this context, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), acting as Secretariat of the EuroMeSCo network, was entrusted by the European Commission to **support** broad and inclusive **reflections and consultations on the Pact for the Mediterranean**. This initiative responds to the EU's strategic objective of formulating a New Pact grounded in mutual understanding and informed by structured dialogue with Southern partners. The present **Euromed Survey contributes to the broader consultation campaign, bringing open, region-wide perspectives to the table**.

This report analyses the main results from the survey, conducted in March 2025. It **provides valuable insights on the understanding of a variety of experts and actors on the EU's overall engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood and its cooperation frameworks**.

The survey collected inputs from the European Union (EU) and Southern Neighbourhood Countries (SNC), engaging policymakers, experts, and civil society representatives. The questionnaire focused on two main sections. The first explored key aspects of the **EU's engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood**: the EU's role and impact in the region; the influence of other major regional actors; the potential of EU–SNC partnerships; and the implications of the EU's response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second section examined **how to shape effective cooperation**, including the structuring of cooperation mechanisms, the definition of clear priorities, the role of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the mobilisation of the Global Gateway and strategic infrastructure investments to foster deeper regional integration.

These are the survey's main take-aways:

- Since the launch of the new Agenda for the Mediterranean in 2021, **the EU's role in the Southern Neighbourhood is generally perceived as stable**. Views from the European Union tend to be more critical, while **perspectives from SNCs are more positive**.
- The EU has **strengthened its role in environmental and climate-related areas**, though **conflict resolution remains the most urgent challenge**. Concerns persist over **declining influence in economic cooperation and democratic governance**.
- The EU sees the Gulf countries and Türkiye as key regional players, while **the Southern Neighbourhood views the EU as the main actor across the**

region. Compared to other players, EU's **added value** stems from its **values-based, long-term, and comprehensive approach**.

- Nevertheless, the **EU's response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has undermined its core values and credibility in the region**. To play an effective role in a post-conflict scenario, respondents underlined that the priority should be given to the **recognition of the Palestinian State** and the **reconstruction of human capacity in Gaza**.
- They also stress that the enhancement of the EU's engagement with the Southern Neighbourhood requires prioritising a **strong partnership model**. Relations between the EU and SNCs should be built on **greater equality and mutual balance**, while also contributing to the **resolution of long-standing conflicts**.
- Within the toolbox of the New Pact, **investment instruments should be considered a top priority**. Particular emphasis should be placed on **fostering talent and skills**, as well as **intensifying cooperation on climate adaptation**. There is broad agreement that the main areas for action are economic development, trade, and investment, followed by environment and climate change adaptation.
- The **Union for the Mediterranean is recognised as a key platform** for advancing shared interests on equal terms and should further develop regional cooperation mechanisms. Its **reform should prioritise enhanced dialogue with neighbouring regions** through collaboration with other actors.
- The Global Gateway strategy offers strong potential, notably in employment generation and infrastructure development. **Digital connectivity and sustainable transport corridors are particularly relevant for promoting regional integration**.

To shed light and help explain these issues, the report is accompanied by a series of qualitative analyses:

**Charlotta Sparre** explores how the New Pact for the Mediterranean can renew joint investment in dialogue in the current context, drawing on past successes and failures. **Salam Kawakibi** looks closer on how to revamp EU-Mediterranean cooperation for more balanced and sustainable partnerships. **Christian Hanelt** and **Nico Zillekens** focused on how the European Union, the Southern Neighbourhood and the Gulf Cooperation Council can shape the future together in an increasingly multipolar Mediterranean landscape. Finally, **Yasmina Abouzzohour** examines how to bridge public opinion and stakeholder perspectives on climate change in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Wrapping up, strengthening the EU's role in the Southern Neighbourhood will require sustained political commitment, improved coherence in its external action, and a renewed focus on mutual trust.** A key challenge ahead lies in effectively translating strategic priorities into tangible outcomes on the ground. **Ensuring that partnerships are rooted in shared ownership and respond to locally identified needs will be essential for building credible and lasting cooperation.**

To support this effort, the IEMed is complementing the regional Survey with a series of consultation circles held not only in Brussels but also across key Southern Neighbourhood countries, including Rabat and Cairo. These events brought together, between April and June 2025, local experts, civil society representatives, and policymakers to deepen dialogue and ensure that regional perspectives directly inform the policy process.

Learn more about the project: [euromesco.net](https://euromesco.net)