



Contribution of the  
Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable  
Development (MIO-ECSDE)

to the consultation:

**"Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy"**  
(Policy field: External relations - European Neighbourhood Policy)

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**General comments (which also address several of the many questions)**

The paper has some new great elements but its analysis is rather limited and does not take into consideration important elements of the situation, particularly in the South. It is fragmented and somewhat "partial", mostly influenced by traditional security aspects, overlooking the areas of convergence and the effective tools developed over the last decades including those with EU support.

There are many areas where cooperation and understanding between the EU and its neighbours are much higher than described, such as in the areas of Environment, major aspects of Sustainable Development and, recently, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), where a large number of highly successful initiatives in the southern neighbourhood have been undertaken, many of which with the active involvement of many stakeholders.

Some of the problems in the analysis are due to the fact that the East and South are dealt with together, while they are substantially different and also because the sources of information come from the Governments of the countries through the annual reports.

Experience has shown that the most positive results in the neighborhood come from the analysis of actions carried out by synergies of Governments with Civil Society, which, unfortunately, frequently escape the attention of reports and analysts. It is indicative that the highly successful (according to all evaluation reports, etc.) HORIZON 2020 Initiative to De-Pollute the Mediterranean and its projects, is not even mentioned in the analysis. Similarly, the achievement of obtaining a "Mediterranean Strategy on ESD" is also ignored and the fact that the Mediterranean Region, being



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perhaps a world champion - for a “non-UN region” (but an eco-region) - with the most developed system of Civil Society, Scientific and Academic Networks, is not even mentioned. This fact alone is “telling” of the nature of the analysis.

Asking to comment against this background, unavoidably, equals to inviting active players to complete the picture, present their activities and eventually promote themselves to the extent that commenting may lead to a “beauty contest”. However, the lack of reference to important organizations, initiatives and achievements in the Mediterranean remains an issue.

MIO-ECSDE, being very active in the Region since the 80s and in its present form, with a balanced number of member NGOs from the North and South shores of the Mediterranean, has participated since 1992 to approximately 350 formal political meetings, under all relevant processes and organizations (primarily EU, UNEP/MAP, UfM, UNECE, UNESCO, LAS, etc.) and has initiated a considerable number of small, medium and large scale initiatives/programmes and projects with very successful results. It is noteworthy that its membership comes from all the countries of the region, the EU Mediterranean ones including Portugal, all the Mediterranean Arab ones including Jordan, all the non EU Balkan ones, Israel and Turkey. Despite the fact that the overall situation in the region is, as described in the document, worse now than it was a few years ago, the cooperation among the NGOs and also within all the Circles which MIO-ECSDE facilitates (MEdIES - educators, COMPSUD – Members of Parliament, COMJESD - journalists, Mediterranean Universities for SD) was continued without interruption and has produced an effective “diplomacy” for sustainability across the Mediterranean.

Statements such as “some partners show no interest at all”, or “not all partners seem equally interested in a special partnership with the EU”, etc. do not accurately reflect the attitude of the Partners in the Mediterranean Region (at least in the areas of environment and sustainable development) who are in general eager to develop closer links with the EU.

It is true that the attitude of the PCs with their own neighbours and the “other” powers active in the region (US, China, Japan, Korea, Gulf Arab Countries, Russia) varies widely, but again this is, to a large extent, the “reaction” to EU external policies frequently and openly criticized (correctly or not) as bureaucratic and/or inflexible and inefficient.

The economic crisis in Europe and in particular in its South, demonstrating the difficulties and lack of solidarity within the EU to support effectively its own full members to address their problems, erodes the confidence of the PCs in EU principles, policies and institutions. It is not very convincing that a Union which tries to “help” third parties, cannot help effectively its own members in addressing similar and perhaps less extreme situations “at home” than the ones prevailing in the neighborhood.

The question about “deepening relationships” seems to be a rather rhetoric one (except for the Western Balkans), particularly under President’s Juncker’s Political Guidelines for no further

enlargement (which, in principle, is correct if such a decision will allow for solidification of the current membership). However, the enlargement policy is directly linked with the ENP and cannot run in parallel without raising questions and/or creating problems of coherence. This is also true for a series of other policies.

In the analysis about shortcomings in Part II, the document points to poorly documented and largely inaccurate conclusions about ownership, etc., perhaps based on specific sectors of security and ignoring others such as the environment, civil society involvement at regional level, etc.

On the question about current geographical scope our view is clear: while ENP should be maintained and enhanced as a holistic policy and integrated approach, more flexible ways of working are necessary.

- (a) The Mediterranean, including the Western Balkans, needs to be dealt with differently from the East and
- (b) Within the Mediterranean there are two “spheres”. Some smaller countries, eager to follow faster the EU “norms” and models and others which, for a combination of reasons (historical, population size, sociocultural background, etc.) have more difficulties and challenges to address.

The combination of regional and bilateral tools may effectively address these differentiations including the one of “neighbours of the neighbours” which as indicated in part I is extended also (or mainly) to “other spheres of influence”.

#### **Replies to specific questions:**

*How could a more comprehensive approach with more active involvement by Member States give the policy greater weight? Would stronger co-ownership of the policy be preferred by partners?*

The involvement of Member States as well as of the Partner Countries is ensured (qualitatively as well) not only through the governments but also, if not mainly, through civil society, including the economic sector.

*Are the ENP Action Plans the right tool to deepen our partnerships? Are they too broad for some partners? Would the EU, would partners, benefit from a narrower focus and greater prioritisation? Is this approach appropriate for all partners? Has it added value to the EU’s relations with each of its partners? Can EU and/or partner interests be served by a lighter reporting mechanism? Should the reporting be modulated according to the level of engagement of the ENP partner concerned? How can we better communicate key elements?*

Lighter, more flexible reporting schemes with encouragement of more participatory processes is needed.

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*Can partnerships be focussed more explicitly on joint interests, in order to increase ownership on both sides? How should the ENP accommodate the differentiation that this would entail? Are new elements needed to support deeper cooperation in these or other fields?*

We have to start with the lower hanging fruits, i.e. where traditional cooperation schemes and partners exist, function well and produce results. A mapping exercise is required to guide priorities on the basis of existing successes.

*How can the EU do more to support sustainable economic and social development in the ENP partner countries? How can we empower economically, politically and socially the younger generation? How to better promote sustainable employment? And how can these objectives be better linked to indispensable reforms in the fields of anti-corruption, judicial reform, governance and security, which are prerequisites for foreign direct investment?*

Unless Sustainable Development with all its pillars and qualities (social, economic, environmental) is recognized as the basis of the ENP we may not expect significant improvement in the situation.

*How should the ENP address conflicts and crises in the neighbourhood? Should CFSP and CSDP activities be better integrated in the ENP framework? Should it have a greater role in developing confidence-building measures and post-conflict actions as well as related state- and institution-building activities? Should the ENP be given a strengthened focus on working with partners on the prevention of radicalisation, the fight against terrorism and organised crime? Should security sector reform be given greater importance in the ENP?*

YES

*Is the multilateral dimension able to deliver further added value? Are these formats fit for purpose? How can their effectiveness be strengthened? Can we more effectively use other, more flexible frameworks? Can we better cooperate with other regional actors (Council of Europe, OSCE, League of Arab States, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, African Union)?*

YES, but a prerequisite for productive cooperation would require an in-depth understanding of the vision, culture, priorities, competences and mandate of each one of these organizations.

*How should the ENP further develop engagement with civil society in its widest sense?*

By capitalizing on existing competent networks and avoid dilution.

*Can more be done to network different parts of the partner populations?*

See directly above. In some cases new networks may be encouraged.

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*What more can be done to promote links between business communities? With and between Social Partners (trade unions and employers' organisations) and to promote social dialogue?*

- Cultivate the spirit of dialogue which can be done through Education for Sustainable Development (see relevant strategies- Mediterranean and UNECE)
- Create the enabling conditions e.g. by encouraging all countries to adhere to the Aarhus Convention, conduct EIAs, SEAs, IWRM, with active participatory processes, etc.

*What can be done to promote links between scientific communities, universities, local authorities, women, youth, the media?*

Several networks already exist in the Mediterranean. New information on the aspirations of youth for their futures is expected soon through a Mediterranean-wide Youth [survey](#).

*How can the ENP do more to foster religious dialogue and respect for cultural diversity, and counter prejudice? Should increasing understanding of each other's cultures be a more specific goal of the ENP and how should this be pursued? How can the ENP help tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups?*

A major channel should again be the existing networks in place where members of different faiths have been cooperating for many years and confidence has been established.

*Do you agree with the proposed areas of focus? If not, what alternative or additional priorities would you propose?*

Security is very important in the Southern region but it should be understood and dealt with in a wider and more comprehensive way **by including the nexus of energy-water-food-ecosystems at its core**. Therefore, environment, climate change, water, food security and health should go higher up on the agenda.

This links with and creates the much needed employment opportunities particularly for youth, within a Green economy.

*Does the ENP currently have the right tools to address the priorities on which you consider it should focus? If not, what new tools could be helpful to deepen cooperation in these sectors?*

YES, there are several tools already: information, consultation, capacity building, demonstration projects, support for innovation, etc. HOWEVER, in the last years, relevant initiatives and tools tend to be gigantic, administratively heavy and demanding, excluding some sectors and stakeholders.

*What tools would the EU need to respond more effectively to fast-changing developments in its neighbourhood?*

Prospective analysis and surveys taking into account also the views of the ordinary people.



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*Can the structures of the ENP be made more cooperative, to underline the partners' own choices and to enable all civil society actors across partner countries to take part?*

YES there is plenty of room for improvement and early involvement of civil society actors.