



## EU Consultation "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy"

### AVSI contribution

AVSI Foundation is an international NGO based in Italy and active since many years in Middle East (Palestine since 1993, Lebanon since 1996, Jordan since 2001). Our contribution is based on our experience in the region and in general in development cooperation, since AVSI is working in this sector since 1972.

First of all, in the basic document for the consultation, we note that the problems that the European Union aims to address in the neighbouring countries are the same that the EU itself is facing in its inside:

- **democracy**: voters in European countries fell sharply in every election;
- **work**: unemployment is a major problem in many Member States;
- **civil society**: the relationship of the EU with civil society risks to be sometimes more nominal than real, limited to platforms or networks that are often disconnected from their constituencies. Therefore the real demands of citizens and their aggregations do not always find appropriate spaces of expression.

The contribution of AVSI to this consultation is primarily methodological, since what will be realised in the neighbourhood policy can be utilised in dealing with other partner countries.

We think that, in the new neighbourhood policy and in the programming of new programmes, it is important to avoid rigid preconceived schemes, and to adopt the necessary flexibility **to enhance the existing positive experiences**, even if they are on small scale. A real change needs long time and it cannot be predicted in detail (especially considering the difference in culture and mentality of the countries we are talking about). Therefore, the most useful contribution is to facilitate the triggering of processes that the people involved can bring forward over time.

For example in our experience, **the peaceful coexistence among different groups is favoured**, more than by strictly political initiatives, **by the involvement of people in concrete activities that bring real benefits to everyone**, such as **the joint management of water for southern farmers in Lebanon**. Such actions require long-term programmes.

Another very important point is **the respect for the dignity of every person**, especially in an emergency situations with refugees and displaced people. In order to build and rebuild the social and human contest, it is necessary that people feel they are considered a resource and not a problem. This could be better reached through a system such as **cash for work, compared to the mere distribution of goods or money**.

**Unity in diversity and the respect for the dignity of every person are fundamental values of Europe**. Therefore, it is important that **identity and visibility of the European Union go hand in hand**, because the populations close to us can recognise the European 'face' not only in the communication but also in the concrete actions.

For this purpose, it is suggested to focus on **financing modalities that favour the action and the visibility of this 'European face'**, rather than on other more 'comfortable' modalities from a management perspective, but not expressing a European method and identity (eg. trust funds, UN system, etc.)

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