



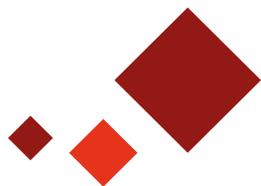
REGIONAL REPORT

THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA Social Rights Monitor

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The Social Rights Monitor is a tool developed by SOLIDAR members and partners to allow partner organisations and allies based in the country to assess the situations in terms of social protection, decent work and enabling environment and track the progress made since the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy and the partnership priorities established with the EU. Taking a regional perspective, this report aims to provide a brief overview of EU-Arab relations and key issues of concern while reporting on the situation in terms of decent work, social protection and an enabling environment.



Introduction: an overview of EU-Arab relations

EU-Arab relations have been evolving since the Barcelona Process, yet over the last decade crises on both sides have stimulated significant changes for the partnership. On the European side there was the economic and financial Eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis. On the Southern Mediterranean side the Arab uprisings highlighted the widespread inequalities, lack of social justice and the weakness of their democracies. Wars and conflicts in the region became part of the crisis situation as well. Developments on the global stage were equally important in shaping the context for the partnership, however. Recently, with the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, the partnership can be considered within a broader framework. This is mainly because Agenda 2030 is a universal commitment (undertaken both by the EU and Arab countries) and provides a common framework in which both partners should work to achieve sustainable development for all with commitments towards people, the planet and prosperity.

In this context, the evolving nature of EU-Arab relations can easily be seen from the policy revisions and new policy measures that impact the partnership. A key development was the revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2011 and later in 2015. Similarly, the launch of the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016 shaped overall EU external action. Later in 2017, the EU adopted the European External Investment Plan (EEIP) and Compacts with Southern Neighbourhood countries under the European Migration Framework (EMF) - particularly in response to the need to address the refugee crisis and address its root causes, as stated by the EU.

In this section, common aspects of these policy revisions will be elaborated to present an overview

of the partnership, with an emphasis on ensuring that the key principles remain at the heart of these policies in order for them contribute to prosperity, development and peace. These principles start with ensuring policy coherence for development, adopting a rights-based approach and enhancing mutual accountability. Mutual accountability is significant for a genuine partnership. These policy measures should not turn into a set of conditionalities imposed on Southern Partners that serve only to restrict national policy space. On the other hand, the crises faced in the two regions are interlinked and need coherent measures to address them. Widespread poverty and inequalities, unemployment, discrimination in the partner countries that result in social injustices, immigration and the refugee crisis require social and economic policy reforms, rather than the promotion of austerity measures, liberalization/privatization and investment policies without development outcomes. Likewise, the lack of security and stability in the region and achieving sustainable peace require measures to address the arms trade, particularly given that many European countries remain major arms suppliers to the region.

Security concerns at the centre of the partnership:

A common aspect of all these policies (ENP, EUGS and EMF) is that “security” concerns shaped them considerably. A Euro-centric approach is obvious in each of them, which is not surprising given that 86 per cent¹ of Europeans see the EU’s external borders as an important security challenge. Both the refugees’ arrival at EU borders from sea and land, and the increasing terrorist attacks against European citizens have pushed security to the top of many countries’ agendas. At the same time, right-wing political discourse within European member countries has gained support, despite being xenophobic and racist, contrary to European Union core values and principles. Protectionist measures



1. <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/80698>

for border control - building fences or deploying troops outside EU borders - were discussed in several countries, as well as increased arms trading in order to combat illegal immigration. Keeping refugees away became a priority, and when the progress of the Mobility Partnership Framework (MPF) was measured it indicated a reduced number of arrivals on the Italian coast and enhanced border controls in the countries of origin. Similarly, the revised ENP has a stronger focus on “stabilization” and resilience, overlooking the experience of previous ENPs, within which for the sake of stability partnerships were built and sustained over several years with authoritarian regimes. Human beings want to feel secure, it is in their very nature, yet a narrow approach to security in policy-making processes does not achieve anything. A comprehensive approach to human security should be adopted. Human security was defined as “the liberation of human beings from those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which their lives and freedom are vulnerable” by the 2009 Arab Human Development Report. It identifies seven dimensions in this regard, including pressures on environmental resources, the performance of the state in guaranteeing or undermining human security, the personal insecurity of vulnerable groups, economic vulnerability, poverty and unemployment, food security and nutrition, health and human security, the systemic insecurity of occupation and foreign military intervention. Unfortunately, the EU policy discourse remained limited in its integration of these elements.

Increasing role for the private sector within the partnership: A second aspect of these EU policies is the neo-liberal economic policy approach promoted together with a key role for the private sector. The EU with its Communication on a Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing

Countries in 2014 and lately with the New European Consensus on Development in 2017 articulated its approach. Leveraging private investments for development projects, promoting an enabling environment for business and support for the local private sector (i.e. SMEs) and promoting private-public-partnerships (PPPs) are its key elements. In this approach the EU considers private investors as the engine of inclusive growth, decent jobs creation, efficient provision of public services and goods. The private sector is a key development partner, yet it is important to consider the nature of jobs created and sectors that are prioritized and invested in. The region needs sustainable and decent work opportunities created by investments in productive sectors with value added. On the other hand, the continuous push for the private sector by the EU might have negative impacts for achieving social justice if it results in a failure to abide by human rights and environmental standards. Consequently, promoting PPPs and the privatization of strategic sectors such as health, education and social protection can lead to violations of the rights of many. In this regard, the development outcomes of EEIP is found to be limited as “it may end up benefiting European investors more than local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and cooperatives in partner countries.”² It is important to take note that there are no legally binding mechanisms enhancing transparency, accountability and responsibility for the private sector. Thus those European investors benefitting from EEIP continue not to be held accountable in case of any violations (i.e. labour rights and environment violations). In this context, the partnership should prioritize fighting corruption, tax havens and illicit financial flows, and the EU should ensure the regular reporting of European businesses and private companies on tax payments, along with their impacts on sustainable development and human rights. Likewise, it is important to encourage effective, inclusive and



2. <http://eurodad.org/files/pdf/1546818-a-10-point-roadmap-for-europe-on-the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-development.pdf>

comprehensive social dialogue among the various national economic and social actors and with the partner countries on different key issues.

Gaps between EU financing and development impacts:

Last but not least, the partnership should be assessed with regard to development cooperation; and the financial assistance provided for reforms on the social and economic level, for democracy programmes and support to civil society. The EU's external financing instruments can be considered as one of the tools to advance EU values; as the EU notes, "the instruments (EIHDR, ENI...etc.) give the EU the chance to further reinforce its role on the global stage and promote its interests and values."³ Yet, particularly with the dominance of security and stability in the EU approach towards the region, the achievements of these tools remain rather limited. We witness security considerations overriding values. Furthermore, the growth-led development approach remains too narrow to ensure that inequalities are addressed and social justice is achieved as it is without redistribution mechanisms, social protection and enhanced civic participation. Similarly, the redefinition of Official Development Assistance significantly hampers the role EU Member States can play in development cooperation and towards meeting Goal 17 under Agenda 2030. As Concord states⁴, "2016 saw a substantial increase of 27 per cent in EU's ODA spending". Yet this is an illusionary increase in light of development outcomes; "as the amount of aid that reaches Least Developed Countries continues to decrease while the costs for refugees in donor countries reported as aid keeps on rising"⁵. This means more money was spent at home as aid than for those countries in need. With regard to financial assistance and aid given to the region, another key aspect is the level of mutual accountability. Aid (i.e. for refugees in partner countries) should not be a tool to take the burden away from the EU and financial instruments can neither be a tool for conditionality under the more for

more or less for less principle. In this regard, just as any conditionally attached to financing instruments would clash with development effectiveness principles, a lack of mutual accountability would also hamper efficiency. Accountability should be mutual for the partnership to be effective. Civil society on both sides will continue to play a key role in monitoring, advocating and ensuring that the partnership serves to promote democracy, development and human rights.

Following this brief overview of EU-Arab relations and key issues of concern, the next section will present a regional overview focusing on three issues, namely decent work, social protection and an enabling environment. Country-level analysis based on a Social Rights Monitoring tool will help us assess the state of play in the region and understand how the EU-Arab partnership can help address key challenges in this regard.



3. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-funding-and-procedures/where-does-money-come/external-action-financing-instruments_en

4. <https://concordeurope.org/2017/10/30/oecd-dac-meeting-reaction-2017/>

5. <https://concordeurope.org/2017/10/30/oecd-dac-meeting-reaction-2017/>

Report

As presented in the ILO 2017 World Employment Social Outlook⁶, the Middle East and North Africa region has witnessed a deteriorating economic situation due to the fall in global oil prices, which has impacted in turn on the revenue of the governments, and hence public expenditure. With less priority given to social expenditure, social protection is often the expenditure item most impacted by austerity measures. While the ILO report foresees an improvement in the economy, it also notes that it remains challenged by geopolitical tensions in some countries. Moreover, the migration crisis and the considerable waves of refugees, from neighbouring countries in the region itself but also from Sub-Saharan countries, has exacerbated some of the challenges the region has to face.

Social protection

Social protection can be defined as a set of public measures, policies and programmes that are designed to protect, prevent and “transform” poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle⁷. It seeks to guarantee ‘access to essential goods and services, promote active socio-economic security and advance individual and social potentials for poverty reduction and sustainable development’⁸. The ILO has now established the notion of social protection floors, which aims to promote access to services and goods that meet the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality, ensure income security for children, persons in active age and persons in old age while ensuring a further extension to high levels of protection (increasing social potential and opportunities while reducing poverty). It is against this latter criteria that social protection in the region is assessed.

As reported in the ILO World Social Protection Report 2017-2019⁹:

‘the message from the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 about the valuable dual role of social protection in providing income security to the vulnerable and preserving social cohesion in periods of crisis or failed economic policies, was reinforced in the region following the Arab Spring uprisings. This was the case in sustaining growth and protecting the populations in the Arab States from adverse effects of food, fuel and financial shocks (ILO, 2014a). Most Arab countries have introduced or expanded their social protection measures since 2010, including the countries that were not visibly affected by the uprisings. However, most of these measures, aimed at securing social stability and a recovery strategy in conflict countries, still fall short of addressing structural challenges and strengthening social protection systems.’

While these conclusions refer to the Arab States¹⁰, they are also true for most of the countries in the North Africa region.

Responses to the social rights monitor show that the region still lacks effective social protection systems. While efforts have been made to set up new programmes to improve social protection systems, such as the EUR 1.5 million programme launched by the Palestinian Ministry of Social Development and the EU, the efficiency, effectivity and universality are not yet met. As far as coverage is concerned, systems in place do not reach the whole population, either because it can be targeted, or because it only concerns certain sectors. For instance in Tunisia, overall, ‘the population not

6. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf

7. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/download/lifecycl/lifecycle.pdf> (pp. 13-14); <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=54887>

8. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/download/lifecycl/lifecycle.pdf> (p. 22)

9. See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf (pp. 139-140)

10. The ILO refers here to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syrian Arab Republic, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, OPT, Yemen, Qatar.



yet covered by social security legislation includes casual and seasonal agricultural workers, workers on development sites, domestic employees, home helpers, religious officials, the unemployed' because of 'their marginal nature, their limited ability to pay contributions and their reliance on alternative forms of social protection'¹¹. Similarly in Jordan, only approximately 1.22 million active workers in Jordan are covered by social security, and even when accounting for those workers covered by civilian and military pensions, large swathes of the workforce remain unprotected¹².

Social protection can be limited to public sector workers, who contribute to a specific scheme. In some cases, the private sector offers social benefits to its workers but is less regulated. Hence, this leaves different groups of people such as women, people with disabilities, refugees, young people or informal workers, in an insecure and vulnerable position. The fragmentation of the system (different means used: safety nets, subsidies, social assistance, social insurance) as well as the lack of administrative capacity are also referred to as weaknesses. The multiplicity of the funds and guarantors is also challenging and creates a fragmented system, as the case of Lebanon demonstrates.

The quality, affordability and accessibility of essential services, such as health care, remain very problematic in many countries, especially for the most vulnerable groups. While private health services have spread in much of the region, it remains a challenge for most people to access and afford them and people with disabilities (PWDs) remain among the most affected. For instance in Palestine, despite that all PWDs are entitled to receive health care services by the Ministry of Health, free of charge or with a maximum 25 per cent contribution, public health care services in Palestine are limited to occasionally providing assertive tools and aids (i.e: wheel chairs) and some medications based on an unclear selection criteria.

Income security, either for people of working age or the elderly, is not strong enough to withstand shocks, cover risks and smooth consumption. For instance, in most of the countries, recent graduates are not entitled to receive unemployment benefits, given that these are often limited to public sector workers and only provided in certain circumstances, depending on each country's regulations. Taking the case of Algeria for instance, unemployment benefits are foreseen only for workers in case of dismissal for economic reasons. The benefits are also limited (the maximum length is 36 months) and regressive over time. In the other cases, no unemployment benefits are foreseen.

Throughout the region, social protection systems vary, each with its own specificities and difficulties. However, each country in the region also shares common challenges. While the EU, through the ENP policy, puts an emphasis on social development, capacity and financing remain a great challenge. With the economic situation, austerity measures have often been chosen as the preferred option by the States, yet it is contradictory to improving social conditions, reducing inequalities, bringing new opportunities and eradicating poverty.

Decent work

Looking at the four strategic objectives of decent work (promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue) as defined in the Report of the Director-General, 87th Session, Geneva, June 1999, the following main issues were highlighted.

In the ILO 2017 World Employment Social Outlook¹³, the regional unemployment rate for the Arab States was projected to reach 10.7 per cent in 2016 and expected to fall to 10.5 per cent by 2018, while it was expected to fall from 12.1 percent to 12.0 percent (between 2016 and 2017) in Northern

11. <https://bit.ly/2MrG1Xo>

12. Retrieved from <http://www.phenixcenter.net/en/paper/180>

13. See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf (pp. 22 and 17)

Africa. Despite the projection announcing a potential reduction in unemployment, major gaps remain. On the one hand, there is an important gender gap in employment, with the unemployment rate for women of working age being much higher than that of men. This gender gap in unemployment is actually higher in the Middle East and North Africa than the rest of the world¹⁴. This is the reflection of a society which remains exclusive and discriminatory towards women.

Young workers also face great challenges in finding a job. The ILO 2017 World Employment Social Outlook reports¹⁵ that 'active youth remain almost five times more likely to be unemployed than their adult counterparts, experiencing an unemployment rate of above 31 per cent in 2016, against 6.8 per cent among adults' in the Arab States, while youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment in Northern Africa. Youth employment has been often referred to as an important challenge by the respondents of the social rights monitor, highlighting the real need in the region to provide new job opportunities, which are in line with the skills acquired through studies. The match between the job market's needs and education is indeed often lacking. This situation leaves youth with no option but to accept more risky or unstable jobs in the private sector or informal sector which do not offer decent working conditions and wages. Moreover, young people are unable to become independent, get married, build a family or develop their full potential. Furthermore, it puts at stake the stability of the region but it has also considerably fuelled the migration of a skilled young labour force hoping to find better conditions elsewhere as highlighted in 2016 Arab Human Development Report¹⁶. Beyond job opportunities, youth are also excluded from participating in policy decision making or social dialogue, hence they remain unable to exert real influence on their fate.

Full employment in the region will also depend on the capacity of the economy to absorb new waves of labour, such as migrants and refugees. The ILO 2017 World Employment Social Outlook states that 'countries such as Jordan and Lebanon are also facing the challenge of receiving a combined total of 1.7 million registered refugees from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, who have contributed to increasing the populations of Lebanon by one-quarter and Jordan by one-tenth (Rother et al., 2016). As such, future labour market and social developments will depend on these countries' ability to integrate refugees into society.'¹⁷ So far, migrants and refugees are often very much excluded as they cannot access health care or benefit from social benefits.

Looking at the pre-conditions to decent work, i.e. wages, working conditions, employment, collective bargaining etc., respondents to the social rights monitor were not very optimistic. Firstly, respondents to the social rights monitor feel that the performance of the labour market is rather weak, with labour market policy often considered inconsistent and ill-adapted with the needs of the society. Secondly, wage schemes throughout the region have been reported as inadequate, fragmented and discriminatory. While minimum wages have been set, challenges remain: the amount is insufficient with regards to the cost of living; the group of beneficiaries is limited to national and formal workers; there is a lack of implementation, with wages falling below the minimum wage. In Jordan for instance, the minimum wage only applies to Jordanians, yet there are approximately one million non-Jordanian workers. Lack of implementation of a minimum wage policy in the private sector is another factor. For example, in Palestine, in the West Bank about 17.4 per cent of waged employees in the private sector received less than the minimum monthly wage, about 38,600

14. Ibidem, p. 17.

15. Ibidem, pp. 17 and 22.

16. See <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555/ArabHDR2016-Executive-Summary-UNDP.pdf?MO-D=AJPERES&CACHEID=cbbdc892-a0bc-4846-b780-69fdb635b555>

17. See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf (p. 23)



waged employees with an average monthly wage of 1,068 NIS. In the Gaza Strip the percentage of waged employees in the private sector who received less than the minimum monthly wage was 69.2 per cent, about 83,500 waged employees with an average monthly wage of 748 NIS¹⁸.

Despite calls by labour unions to increase minimum wage schemes, there has been no significant progress. This is indeed contrary to legislative frameworks that require ensuring an adequate minimum wage and its revision. For instance, Article 46 of the Lebanese Labour Code says: “the minimum pay assessed shall be rectified whenever economic circumstances render such review necessary.” According to Article 44 of the Labour Code, “the minimum pay must be sufficient to meet the essential needs of the wage-earner or salary-earner and his family.” Yet, the bill for an increase in the minimum wage has been pending in the parliament. Similarly in Jordan wage levels are generally too low to ensure an adequate standard of living with 48.5 per cent of wages at around about 400 dinars, close to the absolute poverty line for the standard family.

Thirdly, in most countries, collective bargaining is difficult due to restrictions, the lack of recognition of independent trade unions and the imbalance in negotiating power. However, the level of workers’ representation in collective bargaining varies from country to country. In Tunisia for instance, the leading social partner, the UGTT, with three other Tunisian organizations, won the Nobel Prize in 2015 for enabling the peace process and promoting human rights, demonstrating a situation in which social partners have been able to exert influence. In other countries, the representativeness of workers is very questionable and very much challenged, with (independent) trade unions not necessarily or regularly consulted. For instance in Morocco, tripartite agreements were reached in 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2014 but no further tripartite discussion

has taken place since then¹⁹. Decisions may still be taken without prior consultation with trade unions. Similarly in Palestine, representatives of the three trade union federations considered as most representative by the Labour Ministry have been included in the various committees (labour policies, wages, labour law reform, and others). However, the representation and bargaining power of trade unions is weakened by the fragmentation of the trade union movement, and political parties’ control over the leadership in some federations. In addition, the weakness of internal structures and governance in trade unions, and the fact that only a small percentage of workers are organized in trade unions limit their effectiveness.

Enabling environment

As identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)²⁰, there are five ingredients essential to creating and maintaining an enabling environment for civil society: a robust legal framework compliant with international standards and a strong national human rights protection system that safeguards public freedoms and effective access to justice; a political environment conducive to civil society work; access to information; avenues for participation by civil society in policy development and decision-making processes; and long-term support and resources for civil society.

Looking at the region and the five above-mentioned ingredients, the enabling environment varies to a certain degree from one country to another. In all seven countries covered by this report, administrative, bureaucratic, practical and legal constraints have been reported as impediments and obstacles to fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression, freedom of association or freedom to access information. While differences can be noted, major trends seem to indicate a continuous shrinking civil society space in the region.

18. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_16-12-2017-LF-en.pdf

19. Social dialogue in Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan – EU report final 08-03-2016

20. See <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/073/52/PDF/G1607352.pdf?OpenElement>

Indeed, with the ratification of the draconian NGO law by President Abdel Fattah El Sissi on 28 May 2017 and with the adoption of the trade union law by the parliament on 5 December 2017, freedom of association and the right to organize have been severely undermined in Egypt. In Algeria²¹, attacks against trade unionists have further escalated. The Algerian government has taken several steps to undermine the activities and good-functioning of independent trade unions. It includes deregistration of trade unions, personal attacks, harassment, arrests or prosecution. In Morocco, the waves of arrests that followed the demonstrations in the Rif in May 2017²² are seen as a breach of the rights to peaceful assembly and association. While Tunisia²³ has provided a certain level of peace and stability for seven years since the Arab Spring, tensions and social unrest have been rising over the last few days in reaction to the price increases and austerity measures adopted by the government. As far as Palestine is concerned, respondents to the monitor shed light on a differentiating context; some say civil society space is clearly limited in light of the Israeli occupation; while others recognize that the state allows individuals and civil society organizations to exercise their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression referring to the Palestinian Authority. However, violations of these rights by the latter are also noted. In Jordan, respondents noted that despite Constitutional recognition of the rights to associate, organize and freedom of assembly the practices on the ground reflect a restrictive reality. For instance, extrajudicial measures continue to be practiced by security institutions on civil society while denial of permission or excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies continue to violate and restrict civic space. In Lebanon, as ANND notes in its publication on Enabling Environment for Civil Society in the Arab Region²⁴, ‘the way the security forces handle the demonstrations and assemblies is not in conformity with the right of assembly and other public freedoms guaranteed by the law,

as sometimes the purpose of intervention of the security forces is to disperse the demonstrators rather than to preserve the safety and security.”

All in all, the Middle East and North Africa region is affected by multiple events which signal a trend towards a shrinking civil society space. While actions taken by the authorities are sometimes ‘justified’ as a means to end radicalization, extremism and achieve security, it is however the reverse trend that is being observed. Slowly but surely, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and the right to access information are undermined, impeding a real dynamic and an enabling environment for civil society to be developed and sustained. Instead, there is a growing trend towards disillusion and discontent, which ultimately threatens the stability of the region.

21. See also <http://www.solidar.org/en/news/solidar-shows-its-solidarity-with-independent-trade-unions-in-algeria>

22. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/morocco-rif-protesters-punished-with-wave-of-mass-arrests/>

23. See also <http://www.solidar.org/en/news/stability-at-risk-in-tunisia>

24. See <http://www.annd.org/data/file/files/enabling%20environment-eng.pdf> (p. 69)



Recommendations

The European Neighbourhood Policy was revised in 2015 in order to better respond to the new challenges in the neighbourhood. Adopting a differentiated approach to better reflect countries' needs, while ensuring joint ownership and more flexibility, the revised European Neighbourhood Policy has put greater emphasis on stabilization, resilience and security as highlighted in the first section. Although these three components are very important, ENP policies should not overlook the social components. Instead, a comprehensive approach should be adopted for achieving sustainable development integrating all the elements: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. In this context, investing in achieving universal social protection and quality education, and decent and sustainable job generation are strong means to ensure stability, security and achieve resilience.

In this perspective and looking at the issues respondents to the monitor highlighted, we recommend the EU to:

- Ensure that the partnership established with the Southern Neighbourhood countries is based on the promotion of human rights and prosperity in each partner country, and that the partnership envisages assistance for the implementation of political and economic reforms towards sustainable socio-economic policies; strengthening social and economic inclusion towards achieving sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 2030.
- Complementary to the financial assistance provided to civil society in the partner countries, ensure that the partnership enhances an enabling environment through structured dialogue, transparent and inclusive consultation processes for all issues of concern to civil society (i.e. trade, investment, development) and other relevant stakeholders. These consultation processes should take place

at all stages of policy formulation and decision, namely before its adoption and not only after its implementation;

- Ensure that promotion of international human rights standards contributes to removing barriers to fundamental freedoms and reverses the trend of shrinking civic space in the region. ENP implementation should be a tool for enhancing social dialogue, as well as promoting legislative reforms for freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression, and ensuring access to resources and information. Within the partnership, both the EU and the partner countries should promote effective civic participation encompassing a strong chapter on the respect and protection of fundamental rights.
- Put greater emphasis on policies and reforms aiming at strong social protection systems and social development, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable groups. The EU should ensure that assistance provided to partner countries prioritizes undertaking reforms at the level of social protection, aims at expanding social protection coverage and developing a comprehensive database of work-related accidents, injuries and illnesses for more appropriate evidence-based solutions. National social protection floors are key to secure protection, prevent and alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. The EU should seriously consider promoting and putting resources into such initiatives, favouring empowerment, emancipation and development.
- Taking labour conditions into consideration, ensure that private sector development within the partnership has a clear mandate to enhance productivity and improve productive sectors with added-value production. Furthermore, the implementation of the ENP, while encouraging private sector engagement should also seek to fight corruption, informality, tax havens and illicit financial flows. ▶▶▶

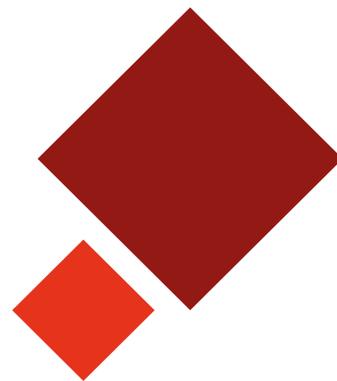




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SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.



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