



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

Input by the  
Arab NGO Network for Development

For the consultation on the  
**EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD  
POLICY REVISION**

**Re-building Relations with the  
Southern Neighborhood Countries**

## Re-Building relations with the Southern Neighborhood Countries

Input by the Arab NGO Network for Development for the  
European Neighborhood Policy Review

### Lessons learnt from 10 years of ENP implementation

The peoples' uprisings in the Arab region presented a golden occasion for revisiting the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and particularly the partnership between the Arab countries and the European Union (EU). The Joint Communication of the High Representative and European Commission, "A New Response to a Changing Neighborhood,"<sup>1</sup> highlighted important lessons learnt but remained an exercise of self-assessment without the engagement of EU partners and relevant stakeholders (including civil society) for what are widely considered today as major historical changes in the Arab countries.

This revision was based on a "business as usual approach" in terms of the tools it provided, namely the 3 Ms- money, market and mobility, which contain the following initiatives: deepening trade relations through Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, creating Mobility Partnerships and allocating more resources

<sup>1</sup>

[http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com\\_11\\_303\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf)

to the region without undertaking a real assessment of their development impacts in the partner countries. In other words, the EU diminished the added-value that its Southern Neighbors are seeking from the partnership to the "prospects for market", "visa free regime" and "more funding opportunities." Indeed, when asked about their prioritization of issues, peoples of the region ranked democratic, political, employment, institutional and administrative reforms over free trade area and migration management<sup>2</sup>. All are crucial today as new social contracts are developing and troubles may continue for long.

**Since the Barcelona process, there has been a lack of balance between the three main pillars of the partnership, i.e. the economic, social and political agendas.**

Efforts to establish a common economic area by enhancing free trade between the EU and its various Southern Mediterranean partners have outshone efforts to create a

<sup>2</sup> IEMed Survey, 2014, <http://www.iemed.org/actualitat-en/noticies/lenquesta-euromed-veu-amb-optimisme-levolucio-de-la-regio-mediterrania-a-llarg-termini>



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

common area for social development, peace and prosperity. The partnership was further challenged for its lack of **inclusiveness and transparency in policy-making process**. Behind-doors dialogue exclusively with national governments resulted in Action Plans without national ownership or a reflection of the real needs and necessities of all levels of society. Short, medium and long-term **reforms were monitored without clear benchmarks and indicators; and accountability was sought unilaterally from partner countries to the EU**. Measures suggested, including “more for more” brought further ambiguity and lack of trust, as incentives were not based on fundamental freedoms or human rights. Finally, no adequate responses were formulated by the EU to assist the transitions initiated by the “Arab Spring”.

### **Regarding the 2015 ENP Consultation process**

In 2015, with a stocktaking exercise, the EU shift from only publicizing a new strategic document (as in 2011) towards undertaking a consultation process aiming to build a new policy based on the inputs of the relevant stakeholders is a step forward. However, many challenges facing partner countries limit effective engagement in this process; including the problems of access to information, lack of capacities to engage directly with the EU Delegations, language

barriers and consultations’ nature-a tick-box exercise-.

Therefore, the current process represents a real opportunity so long as the EU meets the following conditions:

- **The aim of the review process should not be limited to reviewing the reasons for southern partners’ under-engagement in the ENP or spotting failures of the partners’ implementation. It should enable an assessment of the EU-Arab partnership, the roles and responsibilities of the two partners on equal footing. The new policy should be based on the lessons learned and taking into consideration both the EU’s concerns and partners’ demands, balancing economic, political, social and cultural aspects.**
- **the outcome of the consultation process, the initial draft of the new ENP, should be made available for further input and discussion through inclusive, transparent and participatory dialogues at the partner country level. The EU Delegations should provide a clear timeline and an open invitation to all interested groups to engage in the process. Such document should be available in local languages**



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

(Arabic) to increase the engagement of all interested parties.

- before the adoption of the new policy, the EU should not only publicize all written inputs received **on the consultation webpage but also provide its own responses to those comments/recommendations<sup>3</sup>.**

**Transparency in the review of ENP process would represent a step forward in applying the principle of “mutual accountability” and reflect a sincere attempt to respond to people’s concerns and demands.**

### **Re-Building relations with the Southern Neighborhood Countries**

When launched in light of the 2004 EU enlargement, the ENP aimed at avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbors. It aimed at strengthening the prosperity, stability and security of all. Yet it became limited in its achievements and success. This was initially caused by the **lack of genuine EU-Arab partnership: the policy has been driven by Brussels- ignoring the periphery and lacking national ownership and true reflection of partner countries’ needs and necessities.** The Arab countries were separated between the rich in the Gulf and

those populated on the Mediterranean; and no scheme was formulated for regional integration and cooperation. The Action Plans and programming documents reflected this process and were similarly built on a Euro-centric approach. Consequently, EU policy propositions and initiatives have been overwhelmingly protective of EU interests over that of its partners **particularly when faced with a crisis situation (i.e. economic crisis, migration crisis in the Mediterranean, the “Arab spring” and its consequences).**

**The consultation process launched by the EU is directing towards a new partnership that is more focused, is more flexible, differentiates between partners and ensures ownership.**

**The new framework can indeed be a mechanism to support the sustainable and inclusive development in the Arab region if structured to ensure the following:**

- 1. Adopting a comprehensive approach to growth and addressing inequalities and poverty:** The Lisbon Treaty, in its Article 8 brought a legal obligation for EU with regard to establishing an area of prosperity. Yet, for long, ENP implementation focused on numeric figures of GDP growth monitoring the economic reforms neglecting the fact that mere economic growth does not resolve the causes of inequalities. In the Arab region,

---

<sup>3</sup> Such exercises are taken for instance by the EU Bank, European Investment Bank.



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

peoples' uprisings clearly demonstrated the extent to which the neoliberal development models implemented under the undemocratic regimes attracted investments and realized a consistent ratio of growth but failed to address inequality and increased poverty, unemployment and informalities. **Accordingly, the focus of the new ENP framework should adopt a comprehensive approach to growth; one that is sustainable, job generating, inclusive and re-distributive. It should aim at addressing inequalities at various levels: geographical, racial and ethnic, religious, age and gender-based, all of which constitute important obstacles to development.** Moreover, the EU should acknowledge the rentier nature of the states in the Arab region, which are based on unproductive economies with unfair wealth redistribution mechanisms and limited social protection systems. Thus, in aiming to achieve sustainable, economic and social development, **the new ENP should prioritize the diversification of production and the establishment of productive capacities in partner countries.** EU investments in the region, the support to SMEs, enhancing PPP and the allocation of resources through EU financial institutions should be coherent with the development needs of the partners and respect the policy space and human rights in the partner countries. Moreover, the new framework should contribute to **achieving a human-rights based approach to social protection and universal coverage to all**

**people by appropriate and effective social protection mechanisms, including the National Floors of Social Protection.** In this regard, it is important to recall that suggested tools for economic integration, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements, are tangibly based on the neoliberal economic model, and hence should be revised to allow the partner governments and local authorities to identify and pursue policies in line with their own national context and development needs<sup>4</sup>.

**2. Expanding focus areas to include peace and regional integration:** The EU reform initiative focuses on certain areas such as trade, connectivity (energy), migration, security, governance, women, youth, climate change. Nevertheless, while the EU recognizes the insecurity, the mounting radicalization and extremism and the lack of stability in the region, the focus on enhancing peace is limited. Indeed, conflicts among nations and within nations have long prevented the peoples of the region from using their own potential and resources for development. Allocation of resources to security and militarization has been always high. "Security" concerns

---

<sup>4</sup>Joint statement by Civil Society Organizations in Morocco and the Arab Countries Voice Concerns of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade agreement between Morocco and the EU  
<http://www.annd.org/english/data/latest/file/106.pdf>



dominated the national agendas resulting in ignorance to socio-economic development needs and implementation of policies that restricts freedom of expression, opinion and assembly. **Thus, the new ENP framework should acknowledge that peace is a prerequisite for development in the Arab region.** It should not limit its approach to only “secure the EU’s border and to ensure EU citizen’s security”. The ENP should adopt a broader vision of peace covering sustainable development, addressing inequalities and ensuring the full enjoyment of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**The new framework should also broaden its approach to include peace and security as human rights.** It should tackle violations committed by the Israeli occupation. This is a legal obligation for the EU under the Association Agreement signed with Israel, which in Article 2 requires that the relationship between the two parties shall be based on respect for human rights and democratic values. Also, it shall recognize that the global, and not-individualized, sanctions imposed Syria had contributed to weaken the Syrian society and to transform the uprising into a civil war.

On the other hand, regional integration and cooperation is key for enhancing peace and development for the Southern partners. The EU pursues such cooperation through the Union for the Mediterranean framework. Nevertheless the UfM

framework based on the promotion of regional cooperation projects on selected priority areas<sup>5</sup> is criticized to be very limited even in its technocratic and economic dimensions, without consideration of human rights and democracy.<sup>6</sup> **The new ENP framework should consider that “invigorating Arab-European relations will happen through the activation of the regional political dialogue tackling the challenges faced and the nature of relations between the two sides”<sup>7</sup>.** With regards to trade integration, the EU’s tendency to apply different levels of partnerships with Arab Sub regions (i.e. Maghreb countries, GCC. etc.) contributes to “dissipation efforts and the fragmentation of the region”<sup>8</sup>.

Many Arab countries have experienced wars and important destructions following the events initiated by the “Arab Spring”. The others have received hundreds of

---

<sup>5</sup> de-pollution of the Mediterranean, Maritime and land highways, Civil protection , Alternative energies: Mediterranean solar plan, Higher education and research, Euro-Mediterranean University and the Mediterranean Business Initiative

<sup>6</sup> The Union for the Mediterranean, a critical approach, 2014, available at <http://www.google.com.tr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCUQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fdialnet.unirioja.es%2Fdescarga%2Farticulo%2F4918443.pdf&ei=xpBjVe-GFceIsAHag4CYCw&usg=AFQjCNFQ7rq8kULtTUz8gmKUbgFtxI3WBg&bvm=bv.93990622,d.bGg&cad=rja>

<sup>7</sup> When Will Arab Regional Cooperation Become a Strategic Choice? By Ziad Abdel Samad, ANND e-newsletter issue April 2013, available at <http://newsletter.annd.org/newsletterId.php?newsLetterId=37#sthash.K4m7LdcW.dpuf>

<sup>8</sup> ibid



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

thousands of immigrants, putting tremendous challenges on their economies and societies. This creates threats for the future of these countries and their development, as well as for Europe. But it also creates significant economic opportunities which can change the path of development of the region. The new ENP policy should clarify its responsibilities towards the humanitarian and development (education, health, etc.) crises experienced by the Arab countries. It also should consider the economic opportunities created by the reconstruction and stabilization, addressing the financial, industrial, legal and institutional aspects and how they could foster Euro-Arab partnership and Arab regional integration. The civil society should be strongly involved in defining the new ENP corresponding policies, especially as they tackle issues such as decentralization in line with Europe own development.

**3. Shifting from the borders security approach to a human rights based migration policy:** In light of the alarming number of deaths on the Mediterranean sea, projected to be as many as 30,000 by the end of 2015, with a special meeting on migration on 23 April 2015, the European Council committed to four priorities: strengthening the EU's presence at sea, fighting traffickers in accordance with international law, preventing illegal migration flows, and reinforcing internal solidarity and responsibility. This has followed the launch of the naval operation,

EUNAVFOR Med, on June 22nd, aiming to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers<sup>9</sup>. According to the High Representative, this approach targets the business model of the smugglers. Nevertheless it is important to recall that such business model was a reaction to the restrictive migration policy of the EU Member States. To avoid more violations of migrants' rights, measures to prevent illegal migration on neighbors' territory should **go hand in hand with the search of actual solutions to the socio-economic and political crisis through the region.**

UN human rights experts have advised that the EU migration policy, "needs to move beyond emergency mode and to pilot projects towards more comprehensive and innovative regulated mobility avenues... must develop more harm-reduction policies, ...and create innovative regulated mobility options that will incentivize migrants to avoid having recourse to smugglers"<sup>10</sup>. All these efforts **should be further in coherence with the implementation of ENP**, and the new ENP should adopt **a revised approach to migration. This should also involve organizing and easing immigration – instead of resisting it – by offering**

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/06/22-fac-naval-operation/>

<sup>10</sup>

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15889&LangID=E>



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

**humanitarian visas and a meaningful chance to resettle.**

**4. Addressing shrinking space for civil society by adopting inclusive and transparent mechanisms for civic engagement in policy-making processes at diverse levels and for diverse sectors:**

Shrinking space for civil society is one of the key challenges that the Southern neighborhood is facing.<sup>11</sup> Most of the partner countries are taking serious measures to restrict freedom of association, expression and opinion, to limit the access to information and resources, and ignore the genuine role of the civil society. The EU recognizes the essential role of civil society and has created initiatives and additional funding to further enhance their role. Yet, the EU emphasis remains on the “watch-function” and “ensuring better public accountability” role of civil society. Resources allocated under initiatives like Civil Society Facility Technical Assistance focus primarily on “capacity-building” exercises rated solely to training, rather than admitting that civil society in the region needs to be supported in engaging in

policy-change through structured dialogue mechanisms. **Accordingly, the new ENP should establish a genuine partnership with civil society, recognizing their role and enabling direct dialogue with EU officials at European External Action Service, European Commission and EU Delegations. Inclusive and transparent dialogue with civil society at sub-national, national and regional levels should tackle all areas including trade policies and peace processes.** It should build on civil society “ownership” of the dialogue so that they can highlight priorities and define agendas. This would necessitate engaging civil society in all policy making levels, including programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and engaging diverse groups including independent trade unions, business associations, environmental organisations, social movements, independent local development agencies and youth organisations among others. In addition, the initiatives under the new ENP should contribute to the enabling environment and to building institutional capacities ensuring their access to all kind of information and to resources.

---

<sup>11</sup> Regional Civil Society Seminar on 'Mechanisms for Structured Dialogue at Regional Level in the Southern Neighborhood' (held in June 2014 in Tunis). The other challenges include mobility and inequalities. Read more at <http://www.enpi-info.eu/files/publications/Public%20report%20-Tunis%20Regional%20Civil%20Society%20Seminar.pdf>



### **List of signatories**

- Arab NGO Network for Development, Lebanon
- NGO Platform of Saida (Tajamoh) , Lebanon
- Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights, Egypt
- Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies, Jordan
- Lawyers Defending Human Rights, Jordan
- Iraqi AL Amal Association, Iraq
- Association Tunisienne des Femmes Democrates, Tunisia
- Association de recherche sur la démocratie et le développement (AR2D), Tunisia
- Social and Economic Policies Monitor Al-Marsad, Palestine