

# The future of the European Neighbourhood Policy

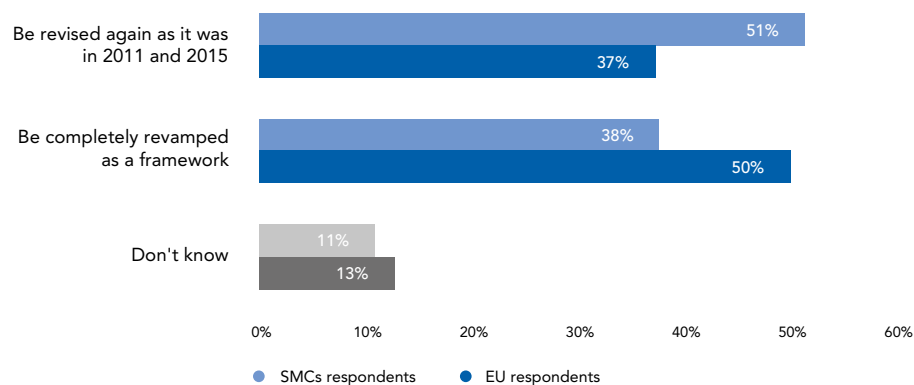
In the second block, respondents had to address two issues related to the future of the ENP. Firstly, what should be done to relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) (question 2). Secondly, if the design of the ENP should encompass both the Eastern and Southern dimension (question 3).

## Main findings:

- Overall, respondents agree that the ENP needs to be transformed.
- Most EU respondents thought that it should be revamped, while most Southern Mediterranean countries (SMCs) respondents preferred a further revision in line with those conducted in 2011 and 2015.
- Socio-economic development and improving partnership structures should be the priority paradigms when revising or revamping the ENP.
- Managing migration and mobility, supporting democratisation and adaptation to climate change should also be central in a revised or revamped ENP.
- Most respondents do not want to keep the Eastern and Southern regions under the same ENP framework, but agreed that the Southern neighbourhood should take some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership.

In line with the findings deriving from question 1, the results of **question 2** demonstrated that respondents supported the idea of a major reform of the ENP, either in the form of a review or a complete overhaul (with an even split of opinion between these two options). The edifice of the ENP was revised and altered in 2011 and 2015, in response to changes in the region. A complete revamp of the ENP, a reconstruction of the framework, would require a reevaluation of its modus operandi but has not yet proved necessary. When asked whether the ENP should be revised or revamped each position received 44%. Interestingly, percentages changed when comparing results of EU and SMCs respondents. The former preferred revamping the ENP, while the latter were in favour of revising the ENP (graph 4).

**Graph 4:** Q.2 Since its inception in 2004, the ENP has been reviewed several times. The 2011, 2015 reviews, 2021 New Agenda for the Mediterranean. The ENP should:



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14<sup>th</sup> Euromed Survey

Comments of those respondents that preferred a revision of the ENP pointed to the need to renovate it by considering new needs and players in the region:

Given the climate and migration issues, the strategic partnership must be strengthened, in addition to the sub-Saharan European strategy and put at the same level as the Eastern Partnership.

— French respondent

The new era and the changes in actors that the region is facing needs to be addressed. The major players in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Iran and Turkey have adopted a different approach based on a post-petroleum economy. This has shifted the focus to a more open-borders approach, which increases the level of challenges while at the same time providing more benefits.

— Lebanese respondent

The renovation of the ENP has become a necessity due to new circumstances in the Mediterranean region. It is therefore useless to replace it with another instrument, which in the absence of will, would have the same fate as the ENP. The ENP, following the latest revisions, already includes the fundamental tools for a better result. They still need to be implemented effectively.

— Moroccan respondent

There has not been a co-ordinated effort by the EU or the EU members in their policy vis-a-vis the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. They have been better at undermining various political systems, such as those in Libya, Yemen, Syria, etc., than helping them to stabilise, let alone democratise.

— Turkish respondent

Respondents in favour of a complete revamp underlined the importance of the new balance of power and the need to change strategies in the region:

Due to the latest developments in the East, the ENP has ceased to exist. We should have a specific policy for the South, focusing on relations beyond what EU calls its neighbourhood and enhancing relations with other countries as well. It should recognise the importance of these countries for EU security and prosperity but through a real partnership. The ENP must not compromise, as has shamefully been the case over the last few years, on EU values, human rights and democratic principles. We should also develop relations with different segments of societies. We must look beyond national governments, on which we place too much focus but which have, in many cases, a contested legitimacy (based too often on repression).

— French respondent

With the challenges and changes the world is witnessing, and what we have concluded from previous experiences, it is preferable to develop a completely new framework that lives up to the aspirations of the peoples of both banks.

— Algerian respondent

We should be conscious of the possibility to bring in change from the outside and the limitations of the tools we have/want to use. We must build consensus/alignment between member states as there should only be one European neighbourhood policy and not one by the EU institutions and another 27 MS policies. Europe is only strong if it speaks with one voice that has clear criteria (in terms of values and interests) for engagement. EU institutions and MS must be flexible to be able to implement necessary changes.

— Austrian respondent

The evolution of the ENP over the years, from a focus on democratisation to stabilisation and then to the proposal of a New Agenda for the Mediterranean, suggests that a comprehensive overhaul of the framework may be necessary to adapt to changing regional dynamics, challenges, and priorities. Revamping the ENP could involve redefining its goals, strategies, and instruments to better address the complex and evolving needs of the European Union and its Southern neighbourhood partners.

— Egyptian respondent

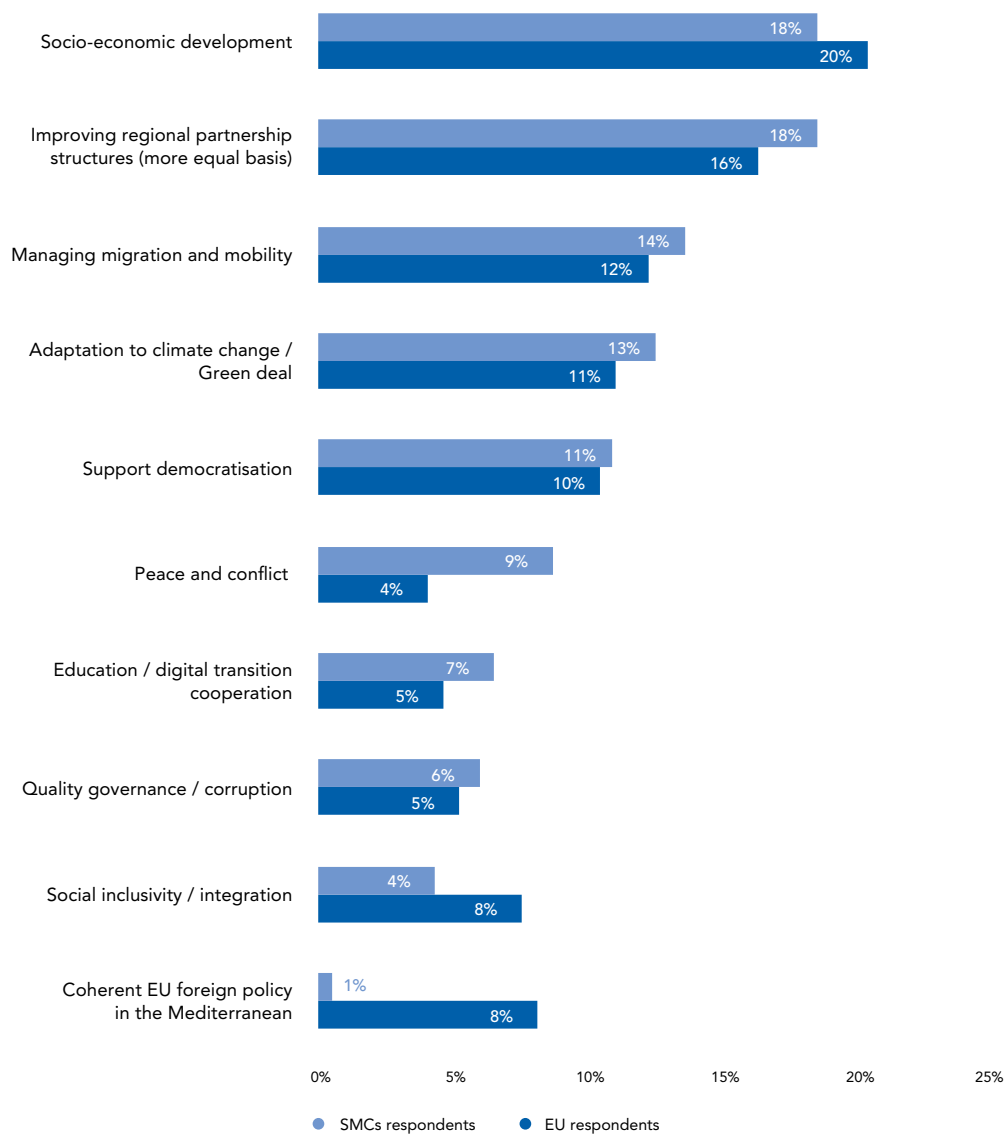
The triangle of factors: climate change, migration flows and diligence in output capabilities should be addressed.

— Greek respondent

As a continuation of question 2, participants were invited to identify, in an open-ended manner, what should be the focus of a revised or revamped ENP. The categories developed from these open-ended answers indicated that socio-economic development (19.4%) was the number one priority, shortly followed by improving regional partnership structures (17.4%). Managing migration and mobility (12.9%), adaptation to climate change (11.8%) and supporting democratisation (10.7%), were also of noticeable importance.

Breaking down the responses by geographical origin highlights a similar pattern of results but with some variations (graph 5). SMCs respondents were twice as likely (8.7%) to be concerned about peace and conflict as their EU counterparts (4.1%). On the other hand, EU respondents were notably interested (8.1%) in building a coherent EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean, whereas southern respondents displayed little to no interest in the issue (0.5%).

**Graph 5: Q.2a** What should be the new paradigm or the main focus of a revised or revamped ENP? (categories developed from open-ended answers)



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14<sup>th</sup> Euromed Survey

The focus needs to be geostrategic and geopolitical and clearly defined in terms of its necessity in the face of challenges from China, Russia, Turkey and others. The EU needs to have a clear and realistic focus, and try its best to meet benchmarks which have been defined and established with the Southern Med partners.

— Greek respondent

It should include an intertwined political and socio-economic development. It must consolidate the socio-economic advancement that was achieved by the partnership as well as enlarging political engagement among wider circles and sectors on both shores. This could be done through the following: 1) Creating spaces for Diaspora groups to help introduce EU normative power (if any!) in the Southern countries through partnerships with civil society organisations working together on both shores. 2) Creating spaces to encourage youth to take part in the design of the partnership's priorities according to their aspirations, views and ambitions. 3) Creating more platforms to give voices to the most vulnerable groups, in order to balance real political priorities with normative power priorities.

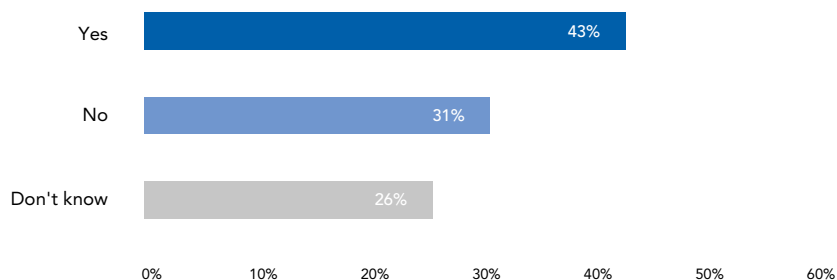
— Egyptian respondent

The whole concept of the “Neighbourhood” should be scrapped as, when it comes to the South, it does not make sense. Tools for development cooperation already exist at the European Commission level. A major investment to step up the EU's diplomatic and humanitarian action should instead be made as a basis to launch cooperation / support initiatives in the domains of energy, mobility, digital, health and disaster recovery.

— Italian respondent

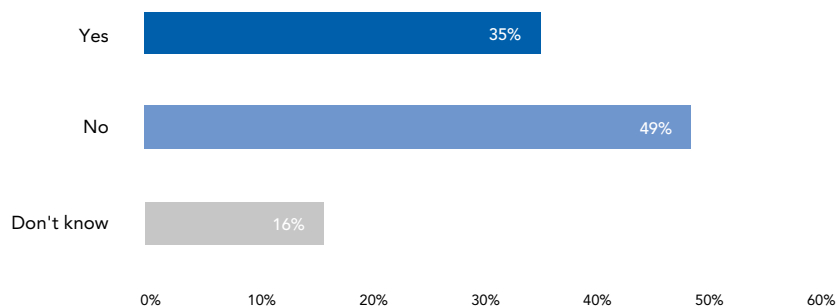
**Question 3** focused on the geographical scope of the ENP and had two separate elements. In question 3a respondents were asked if the Southern neighbourhood should get some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership, while in question 3b respondents were asked about the need to keep the two regions (East and South) under the same ENP framework. Respondents, both EU and SMCs, agreed that the Southern neighbourhood should take inspiration from the Eastern Partnership (graph 6). The results also stated that the two regions, East and South, should be divided into separate frameworks (graph 7). Interestingly, in both questions, a third of respondents considered the contrary, and there was an important percentage of don't know answers, particularly on question 6 (taking inspiration from the Eastern partnership).

**Graph 6: Q.3a** Do you think the Southern Neighbourhood Policy should get some inspiration from the Eastern Partnership?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14<sup>th</sup> Euromed Survey

**Graph 7: Q.3b** From both an EU and a Southern Neighbourhood perspective, do you see any merit in keeping the two regions under the same ENP framework?



Source: Compiled by the IEMed based on the results of the 14<sup>th</sup> Euromed Survey



In their comments, those who believed that the Southern neighbourhood should take inspiration from the East, further elaborated their ideas:

Given the challenges, it seems desirable to ensure a financial upgrade equivalent to the Eastern Partnership. At the same time, it is important to develop an approach less focused on the legal and regulatory framework (taking into account the political and institutional context) and more focused on a project logic and structuring initiatives.

— French respondent

Even though Southern neighbourhood countries hold no viable prospect of obtaining candidate status – thus severely limiting EU leverage – the Eastern example could still provide guidance in terms of deeper economic cooperation and the development of the TEN-T network to foster intra-regional connectivity and bridge barriers for trade.

— Italian respondent

The success of the Southern Neighbourhood Policy will depend on its ability to adapt and respond to the specific needs and circumstances of the countries in the Southern neighbourhood. Learning from the experiences and lessons of the Eastern Partnership can be valuable, but a one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. Flexibility and adaptability should remain core principles of the ENP.

— Lebanese respondent

Countries from the Eastern Neighbourhood (EN) have the opportunity of becoming EU members states which seemed to be a great motivation for citizens and civic activists. This led to positive political changes and the strengthening of democratisation processes. While it is difficult to expect the creation a similar perspective for the Southern Neighbourhood (SN), this could serve as inspiration for initiating a special mechanism for the SN. This could encourage states to improve their transparency, citizens' influence on political decisions and embark on the path of democratisation.

— Polish respondent

It is worth looking across sectors to find what kind of inspiration the Eastern Neighbourhood can provide. In any case, relations with the countries of the Eastern Neighbourhood are prioritised by many EU member states for a variety of reasons. I think the most important factors are, as the Russian invasion of Ukraine underlined, geopolitics and the sense of a “Europeanness” of the countries in Eastern Europe. These factors could even open the door to future accession. Something unimaginable in the case of North African states.

— Greek respondent

Those who argued, on the other hand, that the Southern neighbourhood does not need inspiration from the Eastern neighbourhood expanded on their reasons why:

Given the geopolitical, socio-economic, and every-changing migratory flows in the Southern Mediterranean region, the EU needs a tailor-made approach for the Southern neighbourhood policy. The EU should take full stock of the needs and the nature of collaboration with southern neighbours. The EU should reconsider the scale of 'shared responsibility' with southern neighbours, as well as making clear the gains its southern neighbours could make in its 'mutually beneficial' partnerships.

— Moroccan respondent

The Southern neighbourhood could always take inspiration on how to progress more quickly, despite its lack of resources (just compare Morocco and Ukraine before the war), but it has not demonstrated an appetite for many years. It is simply not ready to assume EU values and principles in real-life commitments, therefore, any inspiration can only create additional sets of disappointments.

— Polish respondent

My feeling is that the EU is less and less concerned with the Southern neighbourhood. Maybe because it is also helpless in the face of corruption, dictatorship, and deeply rooted issues. That is why I say again: the economy should be the primary area of focus. Improve people's lives, improve economies, so that things can change.

— Lebanese respondent