

INTRODUCTION

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The focus of this Survey emerged from the conjunction of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, the new challenges arising from the pandemic and the new European Union (EU) financial framework for 2021-27, which created a momentum for looking into new opportunities for the relations between the EU and its southern neighbours.

Eager to involve large constituencies and contribute to this reflection, as part of the project “EuroMeSCo: Connecting the Dots” the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) launched an inclusive consultation process ahead of the release of the Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A New Agenda for the Mediterranean, by the EU. A consultation in the form of a questionnaire, targeting respondents from both the EU and southern neighbourhood countries, including experts, civil society representatives and policy-makers. In line with this context, the topic of the Survey is “Towards a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood” and the questionnaire is designed to incorporate the main topics that were to be introduced in the Joint Communication.

This publication contains seven analytical articles that echo some specific results of the Survey. **James Moran** examines the continuing importance of values in the EU-southern neighbourhood relationship. **Florence Gaub** analyses the management of climate change in the southern neighbourhood and explores if it could become a crucial driver for modernisation in the region. **Katarzyna W. Sidło** looks closer into the digitalisation agenda, particularly at a time when the pandemic has shown the significance of digitalisation processes. Four additional articles have a country specific focus, providing the views from Morocco, Israel, Jordan and Egypt on the renewed partnership with the EU. **Nezha Alaoui M’Hammdi** analyses if the New Agenda for the Mediterranean will continue to offer a differential treatment for Morocco in its relations with the EU. **Alfred Tovias** reviews and evaluates EU-Israel cooperation in the last 25 years and analyses what the New Agenda offers Israel. **Kareem Sharabi Rosshandler** offers an analysis for Jordan highlighting the opportunity the partnership can provide to the country’s objective to have a competitive edge in its transition towards a specialised products and services economy. Finally, **Gamal A. Gawad Soltan** puts a special focus on the last 10 years during which Egypt has been dealing with the emerging threats in the Mediterranean, while continuing to address the much older concerns related to economic development.

While the complete set of results can be accessed online, this publication also contains a descriptive report that provides an overall picture of the main results. In general terms, results show that the renewed partnership has to prioritise inclusive growth and the social dimension, which are seen as key elements for facing current challenges, to seize opportunities but also for a partnership to be perceived as successful in the mid-term. It is also notable that the EU’s support for civil society, diversity, culture and education is perceived by respondents as its most successful action in the southern neighbourhood, and this is particularly relevant as the investment in education and human capital is considered all across the consultation as a key element to foster inclusive growth, to accompany the green and digital transitions or to counter violent extremist narratives and other security threats.

Another interesting finding in the Survey is that, although the challenge of the environmental situation and the climate change is differently perceived in the north (first priority) and the south (fourth priority), there is a common view on how to support the green and sustainable transition (green conditionality) and which measure has to be prioritised (water security). A similar trend can be seen in the case of migration and human mobility, where EU respondents are more prone to prioritise it than southern respondents but they agree that addressing root causes of irregular migration should be the top priority of the EU's external dimension action.

Finally, as far as opinions on issues related to peace and security cooperation are concerned, EU respondents are consistently more critical than southern neighbourhood respondents in preventing and countering violent extremism or maritime cooperation in the Mediterranean, while both commonly agree that the EU's internal divisions seriously affect its capacity to be a credible security provider in the region.

As previously mentioned, the design of the questionnaire provides insights into operationalising the Joint Communication. In this regard, one of the most interesting elements of the Survey results is contrasting to what extent the Survey patterns match with the strategic aims set out in the Joint Communication. The following highlights describe this matching test:

- Southern neighbourhood answers identify inclusive growth and social dimension as the main common challenge to be faced in a renewed partnership, an element that matches with the Joint Communication's idea of mainstreaming social economy and pursuing inclusive socioeconomic reforms.
- The New Agenda's renewed commitment to promote human rights and good governance in the EU's policies vis-à-vis its southern neighbourhood clearly matches with the Survey opinions, notably corruption, which is perceived as the main obstacle to an impactful Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.
- Investing in education and human capital is prominently mentioned in the Joint Communication, and results across the Survey show that EU actions on education are very visible and positively perceived in the southern neighbourhood countries.
- On EU perception in the southern neighbourhood, questioning how the EU could contribute more effectively to solving conflicts in the region, most answers refer the need to overcome the internal divisions. This matches with the Joint Communication, which admits quite honestly the impact of these divisions.

The matching test is not successful in two specific elements:

- Although the region is to be particularly hit by climate change, the importance of the cooperation on green transition is not equally perceived in the southern neighbourhood countries and the New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Hence, emphasis on ways to reduce this perception gap should be prioritised.
- Results on migration and human mobility show that all respondents consistently identify “building economic opportunities and addressing root causes of irregular migration” as the main priority while the Joint Communication is focused on jointly addressing the challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration and facilitating safe and legal pathways for migration and mobility. Cooperation in this field should therefore encompass these perspectives.