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CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM NEIGHBOURHOOD SOUTH

Fourth Edition

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AMAL	Association Marocaine des Handicapés (Moroccan Association for the Handicapped)
ANND	Arab NGO Network for Development
ATUC	Arab Trade Union Confederation
CoR	EU Committee of the Regions
CoTE	Centre of Thematic Expertise
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DG	Directorate-General (European Commission)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECOSOC	European Economic and Social Committee
EDD	European Development Days
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFIs	European Financial Institutions
EIB	European Investment Bank
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
FTDES	Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights)
GCERF	The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
IcSP	The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IISG	Inter-Institutional Steering Group
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSME	Micro to Small and Medium Enterprises
NIF	Neighbourhood Investment Facility
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAW	Violence Against Women
VE	Violent Extremism

INTRODUCTION

Background and previous editions of the Forum

In response to the Arab uprisings and instability in the region, EU institutions and Member States acknowledged the need for the EU to engage in more regional dialogue with interested parties in the southern neighbourhood. This was in addition to bilateral relations between Member States and southern neighbourhood countries. This strategic approach is reflected in the 2016 *'EU global strategy'*¹, which calls for a stronger engagement with civil society in partner countries, in the *'revised European neighbourhood policy'*², and in the Commission's 2012 Communication: *'The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with civil society in external relations'*³.

Since its launch, the **annual Forum** has been a central event in this consultative process to create mechanisms for dialogue between civil society and the EU in the southern neighbourhood. To date, it has been organised in 2014, 2015 and 2016. The Forum has provided opportunities for civil society organisations (CSOs) to present recommendations to the EU and to exchange ideas with political leaders. Prominent individuals such as Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations and Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, attended.

2017 Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South — objectives and issues

Consistent with the EU Global Strategy, and building on the dialogues and recommendations which emerged from previous editions, the 2017 Forum has been shaped under the umbrella theme of **'resilience and youth'**. Sessions were organised on a number of key issues identified by civil society:

- (1) **strengthening resilience and building stability,**
- (2) **human rights and governance,**
- (3) **migration,**
- (4) **reducing inequalities and economic development.**

This space for dialogue was created to allow stakeholders from the North and South of the Mediterranean to exchange views and share experiences, the aim being to encourage a closer partnership between the EU institutions and CSOs from the southern neighbourhood.

As in previous years, the 2017 Forum focused on civil society and the EU agreeing on recommendations and having mutual ownership. These are recommendations which will form the

¹ <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en>

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/overview_en

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/pdf/key-documents/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/roots-democracy-and-sustainable-development-europes-engagement-civil-society-external-relations_en

basis for ongoing structured dialogue into 2018 (dialogue which is facilitated by the new regional hub in preparation).

METHODOLOGY

The **preparatory meetings held in Tunis in April 2017** enabled some 120 CSOs to discuss progress made after the recommendations of the 2016 Forum. The meetings also enabled civil society representatives to agree positions on the **priorities for discussion in Brussels with EU and regional players**. The preparatory meetings were facilitated by experts in each of the four priority areas, in close cooperation with the Inter-institutional Steering Group (IISG), representatives from the European Commission (DG NEAR and DEVCO, the EEAS, CoR and EESC), and the South Advisory Group (SAG). The SAG was composed of representatives of CSOs from the southern Mediterranean region who had been designated by southern CSOs at the end of the 2016 Forum.

The **2017 Civil Society Forum** took place in **Brussels on 10-12 July**. It was attended by around 160 people, including representatives of CSOs from the southern neighbourhood and the EU and a wide range of players from the EU institutions (European Commission: DG NEAR and DEVCO, EEAS, or the EESC) and other international organisations, regional entities, national and local authorities, academia, social actors, and media.

Participants for the events in Tunis and Brussels were selected on the basis of proposals from the EU delegations, the SAG, IISG and the four thematic facilitators. When selecting participants, the aim was to strike a balance between types of organisation, field of action, themes, gender balance and youth representatives.

The participants in Tunis agreed on a **set of policy and operational recommendations/issues to be presented to EU representatives in Brussels** in July as a matter of priority. Key speakers who could contribute to the dialogue on these issues at the Forum were identified.

On 7 June, about 30 CSOs from the region were consulted in Brussels on DG NEAR's multiannual priorities for the region, and on 8 June a round table was organised during **European Development Days (EDD)** entitled '*Towards common solutions by and for civil society to tackle youth employment in the Neighbourhood South*'. This round table continued the debate on youth challenges and employability, social work, economic development and job creation.

The organisers of the Forum in Brussels sought a high-level representation of the EU to show political commitment. The Forum in Brussels combined:

- **plenary sessions:** to ensure the participants had an appropriate and balanced level of information on EU policy agendas and programmes for the region (Neighbourhood South), and to enable them to contribute to the discussion on the main issues;
- **workshops:** to stimulate debate on specific issues in small groups (20 to 40 people) and to ensure more fluent exchanges and swifter consensus making;
- **capacity-building and restricted sessions for facilitators, rapporteurs, moderators and the SAG:** to enable them to prepare the subsequent Forum, exchange experiences, and coordinate their work.

The Forum started with a one-hour plenary session presentations and exchanges by high-level officials, focusing on EU policies in the relevant field, followed by a short dialogue in plenary. More technical issues were then dealt with in working groups, involving the concerned stakeholders (CSOs from South and North, and EU officials: task managers and geographical desk officers from the European Commission, the EEAS and EU delegations; and *Centres of Thematic expertise* — whenever relevant).

In addition to the Forum's four main themes (strengthening resilience and building stability, human rights and governance, migration, reducing inequalities), 2 hours of cross-cutting sessions were organised simultaneously on the following topics:

- **Empowering young voices** through education and employment;
- **Unlocking the potential of women** in societies and for resilience;
- How the **media** can work better with civil society;
- **Climate change and environment**; risks and opportunities for civil society.

The purpose of these working sessions was to come up with relevant and concrete recommendations to be presented to and debated with the different Commission departments concerned. The idea here was these recommendations could be considered when dialoguing further with national and regional players on regional policies and programming. The recommendations could also be considered for a closer partnership between CSOs and the EU.

INTRODUCTION AND OPENING SESSIONS

Introduction session

After a brief gathering of the SAG members, a one-hour session was organised off programme on '*Sharing experiences of advocacy to the EU*'. The session was facilitated by the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) and EuroMed Rights. This was followed by a brief presentation by the organisers who outlined the methodology of the Forum, identified the stakeholders involved, and recalled its main objectives. Ziad Abdel Samad, chair of the SAG, highlighted the need to work on both the political and technical dimensions of the EU/southern neighbourhood partnership. The chair also stressed that this event marks a transition in the dialogue between the EU and CSOs in the region, as from 2018, it will be co-organised by civil society, through a new regional hub from 2018.

Opening session: Dialogue with Federica Mogherini

Speakers: Said SALHI, Vice President of LADDH (Algeria) and member of SAG; Federica MOGHERINI, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice President of the European Commission

Moderator: Shahira AMIN, Independent journalist

Said Salhi introduced the session by presenting the main highlights of the European Consensus for Development, which is based on stability and security, and aims at ensuring coherence and balance

between European economic and commercial policies. He recalled that the consensus must be implemented in harmony with human rights and democracy, which are at the heart of European values, and on which the consensus was built. He called upon those in Europe who have a stake in the matter (the EU, Member States, the Union for the Mediterranean,...) to be coherent and to develop the capabilities they need to reach the consensus. Said Salhi stressed the **importance of dialogue**; since the upheavals that arose from the 'Arab Spring', the voice of civil society of the southern neighbourhood is more and more present, and heard. He thanked the EU warmly for its engagement towards civil society and for organising the Forum.

HR/VP Mogherini started her speech underlining the turning point that this Forum marks in the EU/CSOs dialogue process; the governance and management of this process are being transferred to CSOs themselves in the coming months. She welcomed the recommendations developed at the preparatory meeting in Tunis and listened with interest to suggestions, exchanges and observations on how they can be taken forward and implemented in the coming years. She underlined that, in many parts of the world, the space has been shrinking for CSOs — which are often accused of being a threat to stability and state security —, and ensured participants that the EU would continue to support civil society and help create the space, skills and means for it to operate.

'After four years of consultation, we are very close to offering the governance and management of this initiative to you. You 'CSOs' will be in the lead.'

Ms Mogherini presented the main highlights of the **EU's global strategy**, launched after a wide consultation with many players — including civil society —, and whose central feature is the respect of human rights. She referred to the **revised European neighbourhood policy** (ENP) that places a priority on security, and incorporates a number of specific areas that will be taken forward in compliance with international human rights standards. The EU will support the southern neighbourhood region to generate inclusive growth and jobs, especially for youth and women, improve governance, and boost trade opportunities. Another priority of the ENP is to **promote economic and social development** for stabilisation.

Furthermore, **migration and mobility** are also priorities in the southern neighbourhood region. These issues require a comprehensive approach. The EU has to manage legal and irregular migration and address root causes. On the comment from the audience that: *'borders are too closed to migrants'* she explained that on this issue, the work of the EU lies mainly in trying to dismantle the traffickers, protecting the rights of migrants, supporting the International NGOs and most of all, working on living conditions in the host communities. On the Syrian crisis, she insisted on the EU's support to the Syrian population, Syrian refugees and their host countries, with the EU providing humanitarian assistance and support for economic growth, education and livelihood.

A participant from the audience highlighted the importance of **culture**, which has been successful in creating dialogue between CSOs and governments at different levels. HR/VP Mogherini fully agreed on the significant role that culture can play, particularly in the economy.

Finally, Ms Mogherini closed her speech with a note of optimism, insisting on the fact that, even if the political dynamics in the world are not going in the direction we would wish, working together remains key to ensure and strengthen the rule of law, democratic participation, and the respect of human rights.

EU policy frameworks

Speaker: Christian DANIELSSON — Director General DG NEAR, European Commission

Moderator: Ziad Abdel SAMAD, Executive Director, ANND

Mr Danielsson highlighted the importance of civil society as a major player in democratic development, acting as a bridge between people and their governments: *'The most prosperous and well-functioning democracies are those where civil society thrives, where voices are heard and where government activities can be freely monitored.'* the role of civil society is fundamental in promoting resilience and working for increased freedom, more respect of human rights and the application of the rule of law.

The EU will always consider **engagement with civil society** as absolutely essential. A government's long-term stability and prosperity is best assured by guaranteeing a safe space for open public debate. Protecting fundamental freedoms is a core part of a stable society; when the space for dialogue narrows, it is a cause of great concern for the EU.

The **revision of the ENP in 2015** provided the EU with a good opportunity to strengthen and re-focus its cooperation on a number of priorities. Major lines of cooperation have been defined with government and civil society stakeholders in partner countries, and 'partnership priorities' have been negotiated with the governments of Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. Tailored solutions have been found for each partner. Good governance, democracy, the rule of law and the promotion of human rights remain key priorities for the EU, with a particular focus on freedom of expression, pluralism and the independence of the media.

As key challenges need to be addressed through regional cooperation and integration, stronger partnerships are crucial to build on inclusive political agendas for the region. The ENP is a framework for a common, shared vision of a region that collaborates, is integrated and inter-connected, and **we need civil society to act strongly on a regional level too**. *'This forum is a significant milestone to structure our regional dialogue; setting up a more permanent mechanism owned by civil society is another important step'.*

Sustainable security and resilience are common challenges today and in the future. The EU approach covers support to reform the security sector, prevent violent radicalisation and terrorism, disrupt organised crime and fight cybercrime, and prevent and respond to crisis and conflict.

'It is crucial to improve security for citizens. It is important to deliver tailor-made and country specific responses that show results. There is no development and stability without security'

On **migration** and the **refugee crisis** Mr Danielsson highlighted some of the responses of the EU (emergency and regional trust funds for Syria and Africa; Euromed Migration IV and City to City). The EU has spearheaded the international response to the challenges on migration and forced displacement; it acknowledges that migrants and refugees are powerful agents of development and drivers of change. Through the ENP, the EU offers to help partner countries to provide a balanced response in managing migration and refugee flows and integrate the benefits of migration. This is done by ensuring legal migration, stronger international protection and fostering links between migration and development. Mr Danielsson acknowledged the important **role of civil society** in this, stressing that it was a crucial player in the shared aim to better manage migration and protect the

rights of migrants and refugees. Civil society should ensure that governments and the EU are accountable. It should also advocate for the delivery of basic services in receiving countries, promote a positive narrative on migration, and encourage constructive links between migration and development. He recalled that the EU fully supported civil society in its efforts to safeguard and protect the rights of migrants.

A lack of economic opportunities and jobs are at the heart of instability, making **socio-economic development and economic growth** key priorities for the EU as well; social dialogue partners, such as trade unions and business sector organisations, are key stakeholders working with the EU in addressing these priorities.

Mr Danielsson concluded his speech by emphasising the EU's continuous commitment to listen, engage in dialogue and be a true partner. The EU also remains committed to act as civil society's intermediary in those places where it is difficult for it to interact with the authorities.

Questions and comments mainly focused on Frontex and irregular migration, the free mobility of human rights activists, and the situation of Palestinian refugees in the context of the Israeli occupation.

Working with civil society at regional level

Speakers: Irene MINGASSON — Head of Unit NEAR B2: Regional programmes, European Commission; Rosa Maria GILI — Head of Division MENA 4, EEAS; Meriem El HILALI, Union for the Mediterranean; Paul WALTON, Executive Officer, Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF), Manal BENANI, Young Arab Voices.

Moderator: Maurice CLAASSENS, Senior Coordinator, SOLIDAR

The moderator opened the session asking what would be the added value of working at regional level for the EU and its partners, as opposed to bilateral relations.

Irene Mingasson recalled in her speech that the southern neighbourhood region is one of the least integrated in the world and said the EU's work and support was aimed at overcoming barriers and boundaries. If bilateral relations and country-based programmes remain first entry points for dialogue, regional cooperation is another channel for cooperation. The EU promotes the role of civil society in both instances.

The EU's work at regional level is particularly relevant when it is building resilience and promoting stability. Also, in the economic field, the EU has been strongly engaged at regional level with the private sector to promote inclusive growth and will continue doing so in the coming years. Promoting a sustainable use of national resources (especially water) has to be tackled collectively. This has to be done through the EU's regional programmes and be a systematic practice of civil society. Gender equality and women's empowerment are key cross-cutting dimensions of the whole forum.

Rosa Maria GILI highlighted that the region has been suffering from a series of prolonged crises, and that the challenges are global; a common response to these challenges is the only solution. The EU global strategy clearly underlines the importance of the southern neighbourhood region and the central role of civil society. If partnerships with governments are one of the pillars of EU external cooperation, civil society also has to be involved. The EU should not impose democracy from the outside; its role is to encourage and support civil society in that process and promote it in its bilateral relations. Ms Gili concluded her speech by reminding the audience that with the new hub in preparation, civil society will take responsibility for organising the dialogue with the EU; she hoped that the ownership of this mechanism would generate new discussions and proposals to make this cooperation deeper.

Paul Walton, Executive officer of the Anna Lindh Foundation, presented the results of a survey by Ipsos Mori which shows that investing in youth-led initiatives and education is considered the most effective way to fight extremism. He highlighted the importance of young voices and locally driven programmes/projects and the central role of communication and partnerships with the media.

Meriem El Hilali briefly reviewed the agenda and main pillars of work of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the session closed with a short testimony by **Manal BENANI**, who participated in the 'Young Mediterranean Voices' programme.

DIALOGUE AND WORKING SESSIONS

1. STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND PROMOTING STABILITY

Background and objectives

The Thematic Group on Security and Resilience looked at the role civil society organisations play on the ground in anticipating risk, identifying strengths and vulnerabilities, and contributing to adaptive strategies aimed at sustainable stability in the countries. The Group based its work on:

- the 'Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action' of 7 June 2017;
- the dialogues and main recommendations on preventing violent extremism/countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE) and security sector reform (SSR) which emerged from the regional civil society preparatory seminars in Tunis; and
- the recommendations from civil society on their role in conflict prevention from a meeting organised by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) on 31 January 2017.

Fostering state and societal resilience in the eastern and southern parts of the EU is one of the top five priorities of the EU global strategy. The revised policy that came out of the review of the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) in 2015 reflects the global strategy's agenda on resilience. Thus implementing the global strategy and the revised ENP (see the first Joint Report on the Implementation of the ENP Review — JOIN (2017) 18 final of 18 May 2017) is a major part of the EU's work to strengthen resilience in the southern neighbourhood. As stated in the 2017 Joint Communication, strengthening resilience can help secure progress towards national and regional development and security goals in a more complex and contested world. The Brussels Forum was an opportunity for civil society to take an active part in identifying and designing adequate solutions through closer dialogue. The European Union aimed at improving the overall response to these issues. Its main objectives are described in Annex.

Plenary dialogue on strengthening resilience and promoting stability

Moderator: John Bell, thematic facilitator on resilience and security

Keynote Speakers: Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and crisis response (EEAS); Michael Miller, Head of Unit B1 Middle East (DG NEAR)

The plenary session was a dialogue between civil society representatives, political leaders, EU senior officials and practitioners. It addressed EU policies and cooperation on **strengthening resilience and promoting stability** with national institutions and mechanisms, including the security sector and civil society.

During the plenary session, it was emphasised that resilience is a priority for the EU's Global Strategy. If given an effective role in identifying and managing the root causes of security challenges

and reacting to them, civil society can help strengthen state and societal resilience in the longer term. Civil society is a key source of resilience, and it is essential to take it seriously, to protect the civic space that helps foster it, and to enable conditions that allow NGOs to operate in a secure environment. To strengthen resilience, CSOs and governments need to work together to build more democratic societies and to promote the principles of democracy. The more democratic the society is, the more resilient and more adapted for change it will be.

On PVE, it was indicated that there was too much emphasis on root causes. What about the 90 % of people who are not radicalised? A better question may be why don't they join violent extremist groups?

There is a need to develop new research methodologies to develop a better understanding of the context of conflict. To do that, CSOs and the EU need to work closely at the local level and better understand the drivers of violent extremism. They need to take a longer view of the root causes and better react in PVE/CVE.

On PVE/CVE, the EU needs to connect with a diversity of CSOs to insure the inclusion of youth and women. The CSOs should not be seen as part of PVE projects but as partners in PVE/CVE projects and programmes, as is already the case with local governments.

There was a good discussion on how to measure success for both PVE and conflict prevention. This may require closer partnership and clearer indicators.

There is a need for further work on education reform and economic development and on strengthening the capacity of the state and CSOs to act in these areas.

A point was made about the need to better anticipate 'shocks', such as the Arab revolutions. Today it is important to anticipate the effects of water and food security problems in the Middle East. A multidisciplinary approach towards early warning would be needed for that. CSOs working on water and food security need more funds and capacity in order to better understand, and react to, the effects of climate change on security and resilience in the MENA region.

The actions of CSOs on social media are vital, and there is a need to set up a media platform that can create new narratives, particularly narratives by youth.

Workshop 1: Security sector reform (SSR) and the space for civil society to operate

Facilitator: John Bell, thematic facilitator on resilience and security

Speakers: Anna Reece, Policy Officer and Member of the Centre for Thematic Expertise on Security CoTE (DG NEAR); Fadi Al Qadi, Human Rights, Civil Society, Advocacy and Media Expert (Jordan)

The **objectives of the workshop** are described in Annex 2.

General discussion: The definition of what is meant by the security sector is very broad, and can be anything from border guards to presidential guards, close protection teams, or the army training soldiers. It needs to be defined more clearly, and it needs to function in the interest of the public. The transition from authoritarianism to democracy is not occurring in the security sector. The

problem of shrinking space and increasing restrictions on civil society was emphasised. Authorities use what is termed a 'chilling effect', setting a precedent by attacking or imprisoning one critic to dissuade others. It is of high importance to consider country specificities and the SSR to be done in context. Improvement of CSO capacity differs from country to country.

Anna Reece: 'The EU is aware of the challenges civil society is facing in the region. Where the EU can provide meaningful support is very context specific ...'

Role and capacities of CSOs: Governments are becoming less tolerant of any criticism of policy. A legal analytical framework is needed to determine a free space for freedom of expression, demonstration, and association for CSOs. Civil society should continue to have the role of advocating for transparency and accountability in SSR, including in its work with local authorities. Civil society can help identify priority issues on the ground, evaluate the impact of EU programmes and report on corruption. Much still needs to be done to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to work in SSR. The EU can help further develop expertise. In Palestine, CSOs are subject to enormous restrictions from the Palestinian Authority and the occupation. However, most financial aid to the Palestinian Authority goes to the security sector.

Improving EU/CSO linkages: There is a strong focus on SSR in the ENP review (2015). The EU is aware of the challenges that civil society is facing in the region. The EU provides support depending on the context. In some cases, there is space for civil society in policy development and monitoring. The implementation of SSR and good governance principles is also key. Civil society can contribute to transparency and the participation of relevant stakeholders. There is no 'ownership' without meaningful participation of civil society. Sometimes a dual-track approach is sought, meaning more policy and political dialogue with the government alongside the involvement of civil society. CSOs are encouraged to engage with EU delegations. Instead of having civil society participating in national level/SSR, there may be more impact by working with local authorities.

Greater trust between CSOs and the State on SSR: Building trust is a slow process; each country is different. In many countries, the security sector is confrontational with civil society. Yet civil society should be the government's partner. Civil society needs to be part of the consultation between the EU and government. Civil society has a key role to play in explaining to people why the reform is taking place, especially in remote areas. With new restrictive political conditions, an attempt should be made to try new tactics to develop trust with the authorities.

'It is important to demonstrate we all have the same objectives. The opposite view was also put forward that civil society should still hold government accountable, not to name and shame them but to identify impact on the security sector'.

In Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan and elsewhere, the authorities have been less capable of implementing reforms and have had to work with NGOs (including independent ones). Civil society can also help develop policies. The new Tunisian platform for PVE/CVE could be a model, although its success should not be exaggerated. In Lebanon, civil society can work with the government to help control civilian ownership of arms. Civil society needs to be involved in the mechanism for dialogue on issues like cybersecurity. Civil society has to demonstrate it is close to people's hearts and needs, and build trust with communities, not only with the government. If civil society wants to act as an interface with the government, the question needs to be asked what can civil society achieve today? Can civil society serve as a reliable partner with the necessary expertise to put forward issues and be heard on SSR?

Recommendations to the EU:

- Support the development of a code of ethics.
- Help governments to choose the right CSO partners, and set performance indicators for SSR.
- Facilitate SSR policy dialogues in the region, joint conversations between civil society and the government on SSR. This can tackle what is the common value of security and why reform is critical. Such a policy dialogue can discuss what needs to be done, and by whom on SSR.
- Facilitate a process of building trust between CSOs and the government.
- Adjust EU evaluation and monitoring processes so local CSOs can participate more easily.

Recommendations to CSOs:

- Play a greater role in the policy-making process and in the interface with the government, knowing that this means building capacity and eliminating threats that impede this process (try new tactics to develop trust with authorities).

Recommendations to both the EU and CSOs:

- Develop closer relations between the CSOs and EU delegations, including with the political section working on SSR and the government, and the operational section.

Workshop 2: The role of Civil Society in PVE/CVE

Facilitator: John Bell, thematic expert.

Speakers: Maria Castaldi, Programme Manager, Countering Violent Extremism (DG DEVCO); Marcos Granados Gomez, Desk Officer Counter-Terrorism (EEAS); Rebecca Crozier, Head of MENA, International Alert.

The **objectives of the workshop** are described in Annex 2.

Maria Castaldi: 'The EU is committed to engaging with civil society to strengthen our collective analysis of violent extremism, and to step up our actions to tackle the drivers of conflict and to prevent violent extremism ...'

General discussion: The objective of the discussion was to tailor work to the local community and pursue the goal of an inclusive community; understand the underlying drivers of violent extremism, not violent extremism itself, and consider the specific features of a country and its individuals. It is important to say what you see, not what you think you see, e.g. be prepared to see that violent extremism is not a primary issue, and that other factors are at play, leading to violent behaviour. In Syria: extremists filled needs related to the collapse of the education system and social networks and the huge trauma. The main problem is not economic, it is education: for instance if we consider the case of Medical Syndicate and Muslim Brothers in Egypt who are highly educated or wealthy extremists;. The EU is committed to engaging with civil society for more collective analysis of violent extremism and more actions to tackle the causes. The principle of EU funding for CVE is that programming must be tailored to fit the local context. The EU is aware that the 'whole of society' needs to be involved, and that includes governments, multilateral bodies, the private sector, and

civil society. There is a **key role for civil society in local communities in PVE and CVE**. Too much time was spent figuring out the why rather than finding solutions. Considering the issue of radicalisation has been in the making for decades, we have to act quickly yet think long term. **Religion**: rather than being a driver, or push factor, religion is more of a factor helping to explain decision to join extremist groups. Religion is like a narrative mechanism that is used by extremists, rather than a driver of extremism itself.

Greater understanding of working with youth: Youth can act as a force for change in CVE.

A key objective for CSOs is to involve youth in the policy debate. Radicals provide platforms for the recognition of youth. They highlighted the need to address political marginalisation, e.g. International Alert's 'map your area' project, develop their skill sets. Youth decide 'who's in, who's out', therefore, the role of sports figures as role models is key. There is a need for very early intervention, even early childhood, but programmes mainly focus on young adults. Programmes should focus on children's rights. The EU is working to improve critical thinking through education and advocacy and for Youth having a greater stake in the social and economic system.

Maria Castaldi: 'youth is no longer merely viewed as the source of the radicalisation problem but also as an underexplored resource in the fight against extremism'

The EU Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) promotes the meaningful participation of youth in PVE/CVE at all levels. Young people spend 2-3 hours per day on social media. The EU should strengthen partnerships with the private sector to remove extremist content and spread positive content in social media. More can be done to encourage creativity, targeting locals with campaigns on social media, in the local language. Local politicians do not provide youth with the answers. Young people need to be trained to use social media in a constructive way.

Deepen an understanding of the role of gender: The EU supports several initiatives to improve the capacity of young people and women's organisations to engage in PVE/CVE. Gender stereotypes need to be broken. Women are often as aggressive as men, and sometimes women push men to join radical movements. Perceptions should not be limited to women as victims of violence. Many men are trying to escape violence.

Developing mechanisms for moving forward: The EU engages in dialogue with governments on long-term prevention, as well as on creating space for CSOs. There has been some progress in Tunisia, but the results have to be viewed with caution. The role of corruption in violent extremism is key. Information is not percolating down to citizens. In an attempt to ensure more strategic engagement of CSOs in PVE/CVE, the EU supports Global Solution Exchange or organisations like Hedayah and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) that reach out and support grassroots initiatives around the world.

Marcos Granados Gomez: 'The EU is aware of the need for a 'whole of society' effort that involves governments, multilateral bodies, the private sector, and civil society and fully recognises the important role that civil society and local communities must play in preventing and countering violent extremism at different levels ... A tripartite dialogue with civil society is needed. The EU can help bring the parties together, bridging the gap between civil society and the government. EU delegations have an important role to play in that regard.'

To sum-up, main points made during the discussion

- An indirect cultural approach may be more effective than dealing with violent extremism head on. Work needs to be done on creative work in social media. EU is working on creative cultural hubs. Work on Med Culture is an important example.
- Involve youth in every step of programming, not just as a target group. There is a need for ideas/mechanisms that come from them.
- Mentorship is key: a CVE project in the Horn of Africa was held up as a successful example of addressing the frustration of youth and addressing narratives.
- Prisons are manufacturing extremists. CSOs need access and a greater role there.
- A platform is needed to share best practices and lessons learned on how to prevent violent extremism at the local level especially. The sharing of best practices from South to North should be encouraged, e.g. success of female preachers programme in Morocco. Also, more South-South exchanges are needed.
- Reference to UNSCR 2250 and role of youth in peace and security.
- Religion needs to be addressed in some way while being careful to avoid misinterpretation.
- Work should also be at city level, not just at national level.
- Create alternative reality instead of alternative narratives; change day-to-day life.
- The EU needs to support the development of the right analysis before action is taken.
- There is a need for youth 'ambassadors', football players, sport personalities who have huge influence and can more successfully convey a positive message.

Main recommendation to the EU:

- Involve young people in developing EU programming to combat violent extremism, and stress the importance of intervening at an early age for PVE and conflict prevention.

Main recommendations to both the EU and CSOs:

- The key is to understand the drivers behind extremism and the context in which extremism develops, rather than dealing with it directly. Strengthen the partnership between the North and South of the Mediterranean in fighting violent extremism and sharing good practices (platform of exchanges).

Workshop 3: Partnering with civil society in conflict prevention

Facilitator: John Bell, Thematic Expert.

Speakers: Bianca Suessenbach, Strategic Planning Adviser (EEAS); Tim Heath, Peace & Conflict Adviser (EEAS); Sonya Reines-Djivanides, Executive Director of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO); Samia Zayani, Water Dynamic and CAFA (Tunisia)

The **objectives of the workshop** are described in Annex 2.

General discussion: The EU global strategy defines resilience as one of its main strategic priorities. The concept of resilience shifts the emphasis from crisis reaction to prevention and preparedness. There is a need to understand conflict triggers, pressures and vulnerabilities. A key objective for CSOs is to build on existing positive resilience; CSOs can act as a 'compass' by helping to identify local needs and determine how relevant external engagement is in relation to the context. The

Joint Communication on resilience underlines the links between inclusive societies with sustainable development and conflict prevention (CP). CP requires a broad 'landscape approach' and transformative goals. Civil society can help identify agents of change. What is CP?: A set of discrete activities like mediation, preventive diplomacy and early warning. CP can also be trade agreements, governance support or work on crises to prevent re-escalation. CP has already been addressed in the past; it is notably one of the key priorities in the EU's comprehensive approach towards external conflict and crises (2014); there is now a renewed international push for conflict prevention. The EU is adjusting the definition of key concepts and instruments to new challenges, to the changing nature of the conflict landscape to turn its ambitions and potential into reality.

How to improve the role of CSOs in EU conflict analysis: The EU has conflict analysis built into several tools, but this can be improved with an increased role for CSOs. Analysis can become more integrated and local, in partnership with CSOs. More structured and regular dialogue between EU and CSOs can be developed.

Sonya Reines-Djivanides: 'Improving the role of civil society in conflict analysis is the absolute basis and we should do more of it.'

The EU needs to strengthen the capacity of EU delegations and define where partnership with civil society comes in. Some said indicators of conflict are already there: e.g. levels of corruption, suicides. Civil society's understanding of CP touches on addressing inequalities, including resources such as water and land. For youth and violent extremism, prevention can also happen through social media, where violent expression sometimes occurs. There is a need to integrate youth, give them space and creativity, and the capacity to act at community level. The role of the media in the Arab world needs to be tackled. There is a lot of disinformation, sometimes resulting from a lack of professionalism and ethics. The EU supports a culture of open and constructive debate in partner countries and supports a professional and independent media.

Understanding better the role CSOs can play in developing improved early warning: Understanding the context is always key to addressing the issues. Before shocks happen, the EU could anticipate. Early warning can help to identify and assess pressure in the long and short term as well as tipping points. It is a way to ensure informed decision-making builds on an analysis of the broader context. What is key is how countries and CSOs can translate this early warning into early action. Info needs to be shared at the right time with CSOs bold enough to take action. The input of CSOs in EU programmes can help. Forums like this consultation help.

Improved connections between the EU and CSOs in developing conflict-sensitive programming: CSOs need resources if they are to play an improved role. As in PVE, youth and local players need to be involved in programming. Start early for conflict prevention. Develop relationships of trust between governments and CSOs, as well as mutual support. CSOs need the EU for partnerships and technical assistance. Civil society is useful for looking at root causes and underlying drivers of violence but it needs to build its capacity to be more effective.

Main points made during the discussion

- Cooperation between southern CSOs is very important; tools and best practices need to be shared.
- More structured and regular dialogue between EU and CSOs can be developed for conflict

analysis.

- Experience elsewhere with trilateral cooperation — government, donors, CSOs — is worth exploring.
- There has to be more interface and engagement with EU delegations. More clarity is needed on who to talk to at the delegations, beyond calls for proposals.
- CSOs should also cultivate relations with the delegations more, and develop and maintain stronger networks, providing them with greater influence.
- The EU needs to earmark funding for CP. Seed funding also is needed to enable CSOs to play a prevention role.
- Conflict analysis and programming should be based on cities and local communities, and there should be work with CSOs on that basis, while also noting the importance of analysis and action that promotes national peacebuilding.
- Early warning needs to be translated into early action. The question is how.
- As in PVE, youth and local actors need to be involved in programming.
- CP is still not working on basic drivers, such as climate change. Projects needed to deal with climate change and migration and displacement. A **resilience approach** can be a starting point for a broader analysis of strengths, vulnerabilities and pressures to improve preparedness and anticipation.

Main recommendations to the EU

- CSOs should be more involved in early warning. This includes ensuring that they have more capacity to do so and that they work to translate early warning into 'early action'.

Main recommendations to CSOs

- CSOs would be more effective in influencing EU programming if they approached EU delegations on these issues as groups or networks.

2. MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Background and objectives

Since 2014, the Mediterranean has seen an unprecedented increase in Europe-bound migration linked to war and political instability in western Asia (Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq) and Africa (Libya and the Sahel). The EU has proposed a number of responses to address the resulting refugee crises and irregular migration flows. It has sought to change its approach and change the instruments and mechanisms it uses to manage these flows and to gather the necessary financial resources to implement these mechanisms and instruments (see Annex 3: concept paper from migration sessions). This new EU approach is not always properly understood, and civil society organisations in the southern European neighbourhood have criticised some aspects of it.

During the opening plenary session, the High Representative, Federica Mogherini, reiterated the need for an **integrated approach** to meet the challenges posed by migration, mobility and asylum in the southern neighbourhood. This approach must promote legal migration, address the root causes of migration, and fight irregular migration.

Building on the dialogues and main recommendations which emerged from the regional civil society preparatory seminars in Tunis, the Thematic Group on Migration will look at how CSOs can engage with the EU in addressing migration issues at regional and national levels.

Plenary session on migration

EU representatives: **Colin Scicluna**, Director, MENA Region, EEAS;

Jean-Christophe Filori, Head of Unit Maghreb and Head of the Centre of Thematic Expertise on Migration, DG NEAR

Civil society speaker: **Linda Alkalash**, Tamkeen Fields for Aid, Jordan.

Moderation: **Marie Martin**, EuroMed Rights & **Hassen Boubakri** (Migration Expert/Facilitator)

Rapporteur: **Marco di Dinato**. UNIMED (Mediterranean Universities Union), Italy

This plenary session allowed space for dialogue between civil society representatives and political leaders, EU senior officials and practitioners. It addressed EU policies and cooperation on migration and forced displacement issues.

The **Commission representatives reiterated** the attention they were paying to the recommendations issued at the Tunis preparatory seminar (April 2017 — see Annex 3), and confirmed that these recommendations were in keeping with the points of view and principles that the EU is trying to apply in its approach to migration and asylum.

‘Civil society should not be a slogan, but a key player in this debate’. C. Scicluna (EEAS)

This EU approach is a fundamentally regional one. It is being rolled out in the two main zones of origin of refugees and irregular migrants: firstly, Syria and the Middle East in general; and secondly, the central Mediterranean. While the southern neighbourhood used to be primarily a land of emigration, it now shares the same challenges as the EU with the asylum crisis, irregular migration and migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean.

In the case of Syria, the EU’s efforts are focused both on handling refugee flows and on helping host communities (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey) to boost their resilience and their capacity to assist and provide

services to refugees. Such capacity building requires the systematic adoption of an inclusive community development strategy, so that local people as well as refugees can benefit from improvements in the public amenities and services provided to them (education, health, economic activities, facilities, etc.).

The **challenges** to the southern Mediterranean are **both humanitarian and political**. In response to civil society's criticism accusing Europe of seeking above all to keep migrants and refugees away from its borders, the EU's speakers argued that the Union had been engaging in considerable humanitarian efforts by supporting international organisations, authorities and civil society organisations in the Mediterranean. Some civil society organisations criticised the harshness of certain actions and programmes to combat irregular economic migration, and even to combat asylum seekers. It was explained that one of the EU's major objectives in this area is to disrupt and render inviable the business model where criminal networks make profits from migrant smuggling and human trafficking. To this end, regional programmes have been launched to promote cross-border cooperation between Libya and its Sub-Saharan neighbours. The EU's support also takes the form of partnerships with the Sub-Saharan countries, the aim being to create economic opportunities that might dissuade people from leaving their region. Developing such viable economic opportunities is a way to fight smuggling and organised crime. In response to comments from civil society organisations on the application of human rights principles (including the right to immigrate) in migration policies and in the initiatives and programmes led or supported by the EU, the speakers argued that the EU prefers to focus on the dignity and safety of immigrants.

The **recommendations by civil society organisations which came out of the Tunis preparatory seminar** emphasise the need for better coordination between the Commission and Member States to promote mobility opportunities for non-EU nationals (in terms of making it easier to obtain visas, relaxing visa requirements and opening up European labour markets to these countries). The EU's answer to such calls is that the Valletta action plan adopts a human rights-based mobility policy. The funds allocated by the EU and by Member States (Germany, Italy, the Netherlands) to finance the mobility of students and researchers from the southern neighbourhood (Erasmus+ and Marie Curie programmes) are another EU response. On migration for work, the EU notes that Member States have exclusive competence in this field and that the Union's involvement is purely political.

*'We are primarily involved at political level, through a three-way dialogue with Member States and partner countries, in order, for example, to provide partner countries with assistance and support and thus develop their institutional capacity to support the placement of workers on the European Union labour market (see the **'Sharaka'** programme in Morocco and the **'Lemma'** programme in Tunisia)'. I-C Filori*

According to some CSO representatives, the call by civil society organisations from the southern neighbourhood for a joint evaluation of the various mechanisms and programmes adopted at the EU summits with its partners (Turkey and the African Union) has met only with general responses from the Commission: Trust Funds for Africa (EUR 1.8 billion), Libya (EUR 90 million), Tunisia (EUR 11 million), general consultations, city-to-city programmes, etc. Such mechanisms, as advocated by CSOs from the South, would require political decisions both by the Commission and by Member States.

The southern CSOs note that the beneficiaries of these funds are mainly large international organisations and repeat their call for the establishment of programmes and funds more suited to the capacity and resources of small and medium-sized CSOs in the South. They draw attention to the duplication of certain actions and to the insufficient coordination between the various national and international players in their programmes and actions, in Lebanon, for example.

Sub-theme 1: Legal migration and mobility

Civil Society speaker: **Hassen Boubakri**, Expert-Facilitator & CSO South (CeTuMA)

EU representatives: **Myriam Watson & Monica Alfaro-Murcia**, International Cooperation Unit, DG HOME

Moderation: **Aymen Zohry** / Egyptian Society for Migration Studies (EGYMIG)

Rapporteur: **Salima M. Alfakhri** / Director of Women & Youth Empowerment Forum

Continuously improving conditions for the mobility and movement of people between the southern neighbourhood and Europe is considered by the various partners to be a prerequisite for integration and closer relations between the two sets of countries. This is because such improvement affects the everyday life of societies and communities living on the Mediterranean coast. The EU's raison d'être is built upon the free movement of people and the removal of internal obstacles to the free movement of EU citizens. How, then, can the shared desire to establish Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) between the South and North be justified without eventually dismantling the obstacles to the free movement of people from the southern neighbourhood into Europe?

In response to the European agenda on migration, which some CSOs criticise for being too restrictive and containing conditionality clauses that are not explicit, the CSOs are calling for the Mobility Partnership agreements to focus on promoting mobility and free movement and inclusive development. The chapters on security and combating irregular migration should be removed and dealt with in separate agreements. The Commission representative's response was as follows:

'Linking the two agreements is just as important a dimension for us, because if the EU does more to help legitimate travellers gain access to Europe, it is only natural that the country that enjoys that privileged access should cooperate fully to ensure that irregular migrants return to their countries of origin without difficulty'. M. Watson. (DG Home).

The CSO representatives stressed that some Member States showed signs of a lack of willingness. They said these Member States were making no effort to make visa application procedures easier (even for people invited to the Forum), entrenching the widely shared impression that there is a gulf between what is said and what is actually occurring on the ground. While the Commission's representatives considered that the costs of visa procedures barely covered the costs of processing the applications, the CSO representatives continued to disapprove of the prohibitive costs of these procedures. They also criticised the use of external service providers instead of nationals from the southern neighbourhood. They expressed the view that agreements to make it easier to obtain visas were actually designed to push through agreements to make expulsion and repatriation easier (known as 'readmission agreements').

Civil society representatives drew attention to the danger that these agreements could further fuel a brain drain from these southern neighbourhood countries, because improved visa processing will first benefit the elite and skilled workers. For this reason, they are calling on the EU and its Member States to expand and open up mobility and movement opportunities to lower-income socio-professional groups, young people, and those excluded from school systems. They want to enable these groups to complete their training and improve their skills.

The Commission representatives reviewed European programmes and actions to make mobility easier for partners in the South. Measures include visa facilitation (lower costs and fewer documents required, more multiple-entry visas, longer visa validity periods); ongoing discussions on strengthening links and synergies between DCFTAs and visa facilitation agreements; and a

presentation of recent statistics on new residence permits issued by Member States to partner country nationals.

There was also a debate on promoting legal labour migration. Two programmes were mentioned (*Sharaka* in Morocco and *Lemma* in Tunisia). These two projects are important components of labour migration because they aim to strengthen links between employment bodies and agencies in southern neighbourhood countries and employment agencies in the EU. The aim is to promote the establishment of an information exchange network on job vacancies in the EU.

In response to the civil society representatives' calls for the EU to improve coordination with Member States on mobility restrictions (visas) and access requirements for national labour markets, the DG Migration and Home Affairs representative stressed the complexity of the legal framework for legal migration. The representative explained that until a common immigration policy is adopted, responsibility is shared between the EU and Member States. This means Member States are free to legislate on entry requirements, having retained the power to determine how many foreign nationals enter their countries.

In this context, the Commission has decided to adopt a sector-by-sector approach, legislating for different categories of workers (long-term residents, Blue Card for highly qualified workers, students and researchers, etc.).

Finally, the Commission has just launched a process to assess the legal framework for managing legal migration, how the framework is being applied, and how European directives are being applied in Member States.

Recommendations to the EU

- (i) Adopt concrete measures and tools (action plan and timeline) to respond to the Tunis recommendations (see last page of Annex 3); ensure that the EU mobility policy is based on human rights, and complies with international conventions, by establishing a joint (EU/CSOs) follow-up mechanism of the international conventions on migration and the mobility of workers.
- (ii) Focus on better coordination between the Commission and Member States on mobility restrictions and labour market access conditions.
- (iii) Remove the connection between security agreements and mobility partnership agreements.

Sub-theme 2: Humanitarian and protection imperatives on migration

Civil Society speaker: **Maria Jammal**, Humanity Crew, Israel

EU representatives: **Iris Abraham**, EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, DG NEAR

Dina Sinigallia, Policy Development and Regional Strategy Unit, DG ECHO

Moderation: **Malek Kefif**, FTDES, Tunisia

Rapporteur: **Najla Chahda Thabet**, Consultant on Migration and Human Trafficking

Dina Sinigallia presented ECHO, the EU's humanitarian aid body. ECHO is one of the world's largest providers of humanitarian aid. It works with over 200 partners, around half of them United Nations organisations. Half of the programmes ECHO finances are carried out by NGOs in the field. Each year, 87 % of its budget is devoted to meeting the needs of displaced persons and the host communities where they find refuge.

Change in the EU's approach: The EU's approach is no longer just to provide assistance in camps. Instead, it has a more comprehensive and inclusive approach involving displaced persons, authorities, host communities, the private sector, and the various national and international stakeholders. The EU aims to set up systems focusing on the development of host countries and communities, as well as refugees/displaced persons (see COM 234 of 26.4 2016: *Lives in Dignity: from aid-dependence to self-reliance*), with closer cooperation and coordination between stakeholders (political, humanitarian, development).

In addition to receiving protection and access to basic services, people must be able to manage their own lives. That means employment and means of support, involvement in local life, sustainable solutions, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, etc. ECHO provides assistance in protection and in the primary education, vocational training and higher education sectors. ECHO also ensures that Syrian refugees in host communities obtain grants so that they can continue their studies and maintain and improve their skills.

Iris Abraham then clarified how the Syria Trust Fund, set up to handle the fall-out from the Syrian crisis, operates and is managed. This regional fund, which benefits Syria's immediate neighbours (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq) and other countries such as Italy, Egypt, Armenia, and the Balkan states, is better and faster than bilateral aid in meeting needs. It makes it possible to address problems at various levels (departure, transit and destination). The fund comprises several EU financial instruments and Member State contributions.

The EU is involved with numerous implementing partners of various sizes (international organisations, large and small NGOs, including local NGOs). It encourages European and local NGOs to form consortia to implement projects and programmes.

During the **debates** that followed, a civil society representative asked how needs were assessed before launching aid projects. She also highlighted the poor quality of facilities and the overcrowding in the premises where refugee children receive schooling in Jordan. The university education received and the qualifications earned by young Syrian refugees in Jordan do not give them free access to the Jordanian labour market. Another civil society representative from Lebanon pointed to the monopolisation of the lion's share of the 'Madad' fund by large organisations and international NGOs, leaving little room for small or medium-sized local CSOs. DG NEAR's response to that comment was that the NGOs leading EU-funded programmes must have a sufficient critical mass to absorb the funds.

The **CSO representatives** presented the lessons learned from their experiences on the ground. These experiences have shown that humanitarian aid must be extended to encompass protection of refugees and migrants from the risks they face, such as human trafficking, sexual abuse, domestic violence, community intolerance, discrimination and adverse effects on mental health. The fight against domestic violence in places of asylum and forced displacement must be taken into consideration. Another appeal was made for the EU to help southern CSOs work in the North and to take them into consideration when planning and allocating funds. This request cannot currently be met due to the legal framework governing the assistance provided by ECHO within the EU, which rules out access for non-European organisations. However, opportunities are beginning to open up, such as the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, which brings European CSOs together with CSOs from neighbouring countries to pursue joint projects and boost their capacity.

Questions were asked about ECHO's absence in Libya and along the migration routes between Libya and the Sahel countries, where migrants are exposed to multiple risks and threats (attacks, murders, sexual abuse, exploitation, kidnapping and slavery, human trafficking, etc.). The EU's response is based on the fact that ECHO is first providing assistance to the Libyan communities affected by the conflict. The EU has developed a number of financial instruments in Libya to address the challenges posed by migration flows.

Participants also commented on the fact that funds for Libya cannot 'show any visible sustainable results. Libyan universities are not involved as solid partners as they are in Lebanon and Jordan. A Libyan representative also called for Libyan municipalities to be more closely involved in implementing EU-funded migration programmes.

Recommendation to the EU:

Create a joint EU/CSO observatory for shared monitoring and evaluation of the various mechanisms and programmes for migration governance adopted at the EU/African Union and EU/Turkey summits .

Sub-theme 3: Building tools and mechanisms for EU-CSO monitoring of international responses

Civil Society speaker: **Linda Al Kalash TAMKEEN JORDAN**

EU representatives: **Camilla Hagström**, Deputy Head of Migration and Employment Unit, DG DEVCO
Corinne André, Centre of Expertise on Migration, DG NEAR

Moderation: **Rachid Badouli**, Fondation Orient Occident, Morocco

Rapporteur: **Manal Benani** / Young Mediterranean Voices)

Since 2016, migration has been included in the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDG). This is the first time migration has been recognised within an international development framework: a very important step for migrants and refugees themselves. The EU has also included migration in its new **Consensus on Development**, having worked on migration issues for years as part of its development cooperation with partner countries, including those in the southern neighbourhood. The idea that migration has a positive impact on both the country of origin and the host country is widely shared and acknowledged.

The European agenda on migration (EAM) emphasises the key role of strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders in partner countries (governments, local authorities, civil society) to tackle the challenges and opportunities of migration. The Afro-European Summit on Migration in Malta resulted in the Valletta political declaration and action plan.

The EAM has paved the way for a new partnership framework on migration. The EU has also launched a European external investment plan to finance sustainable development projects and programmes in partner countries (job creation, infrastructure and public service programmes). The EU is working on three aspects: (i) addressing the root causes of migration (job creation, infrastructure programmes, fighting poverty, promoting good governance, access to education and basic services, etc.); (ii) strengthening the capacity of partner countries to manage flows of migrants and refugees in their countries and territories; and (iii) improving and promoting the positive impact of migration on development, while minimising the negative impact migration may have on development.

The EU concedes that it has focused too much on prevention for the last 15 years and that it is now time to concentrate on all aspects of migration. This means meeting the needs of refugees and displaced populations, strengthening and protecting migrants' rights, and giving due attention to legal migration, labour migration, etc. A political dialogue is necessary (with governments, CSOs and the private sector) to boost civil society involvement.

The new global compacts expected from the UN (one on migrants, the other on refugees) will be efficient tools for carrying out these programmes and other actions planned by the EU. CSOs need to be involved in the consultations and preparatory meetings on these compacts.

In the southern neighbourhood, the negotiations on mobility partnership agreements with partner countries have paved the way for consultations with civil society organisations (for example, the three-way dialogue in Tunisia between the government, the EU and CSOs).

The EU's Trust Fund for Africa (EUR 2.8 billion) has three windows (North Africa, Chad and refugee camps). In North Africa, where the fund is about to be implemented, Libya is the main beneficiary. This EUR 90-million fund has two pillars (protection and stabilisation). In Tunisia, where a similar fund worth EUR 11 million is currently being launched, there are plans to involve civil society

organisations in the operational committee, as is the case in Libya. It should be noted that Egypt is also one of the beneficiary countries. As these new emergency mechanisms were introduced only recently, there is not yet have the necessary hindsight to assess their impact and gauge their suitability.

During the **discussions that followed**, the CSO representatives argued for the **formalisation of civil society consultation frameworks** (involvement in programme steering committees and political dialogue). They also expressed a need for greater transparency about the civil society organisations with which consultations are held in general, and in particular for mobility partnership negotiations and political dialogue.

Some southern neighbourhood governments were criticised for taking too long to introduce migration policies despite the large numbers of migrants leaving or arriving in their countries (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, etc.). Why wait for European programmes to materialise before engaging in dialogue and consultation on these subjects?

The civil society organisations also criticised the lack of independent evaluation of European or EU-funded projects and programmes implemented by large international organisations or NGOs, which tend to overlap or be partially redundant. CSOs from the South are not involved in these evaluations.

Recommendations

- (i) Enhance the institutional capacities of medium and small-sized (local) CSOs working in the field of migration and refugees to allow them to have access to EU funds (cooperation with EU/CSOs and universities);
- (ii) *Set up a mechanism allowing local CSOs to improve their representativeness and capacity in responding to EU consultations and programmes (conception, implementation and evaluation);*
- (iii) Set up a specific financial and technical support mechanism for CSOs to better protect migrants and refugees, and more efficiently coordinate support and assistance programmes.

2. REDUCING INEQUALITIES

'The EU will support the southern neighbourhood region to generate inclusive growth and jobs, especially for youth and women, enhance governance, boost trade opportunities, and pursue macro-economic and structural reforms to increase competitiveness. Civil society has an important role to play in this respect, in particular emphasising equality of opportunity and holding governments to the highest possible standards of good political and economic governance'.
H.E. Ms Mogherini in her opening speech

Plenary dialogue on fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development

Moderator: Carine Elya, Employability Facilitator

Key Speakers: Jamila Bennadi (AMAL Foundation, Maroc and South Advisory Group SAG member)
Ingrid Schwaiger, Deputy Head of Unit & Head of Sector Economic Governance NEAR B2, European Commission; Jean Paul Tricart, Advisor, DG EMPLOYMENT, European Commission

The session started with a general introduction by the employability facilitator, **Ms Carine Elya**, who presented the challenges faced in the southern region (increased poverty and social exclusion, gap between old and new generations, high youth unemployment) and the key issues to be addressed in the Forum.

Ms Jamila Bennadi, head of AMAL (Maroc), was the first key speaker. She recalled the main recommendations which emerged from the Thematic Group on 'Employability' in Tunis. She stressed the challenges facing the region.

Mr Jean-Paul Tricart then highlighted the relevance and interest of the Tunis recommendations. Even if 'reducing inequalities' is difficult to achieve from a political point of view, he highlighted that the Commission encourages dialogue with partner countries on the European social model. DG Employment focuses on regional cooperation. In the South, it works within the Euromed framework for policy cooperation, with a specific component on 'employment and labour'. He stated that the Commission is prepared to support local partners and emphasised the problems encountered in the region, such as:

- 1) the limited capacity of small companies to grow;
- 2) barriers in all the countries to creating businesses;

3) lack of reliable data on employment in the region.

He also emphasised the **role of civil society in formulating policy**. Mr Tricart referred to the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Dead Sea in Jordan in October 2016 and the follow-up work with social partners. The challenge is to convince the authorities and social partners. It is necessary to support their efforts and work with them to encourage debate on these priority issues. He stated that the Commission is prepared to support the initiative of the members of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Commission is prepared to support the social partners' call to follow up on the Ministerial Declaration. He also mentioned some ongoing projects that address some of the challenges: 1) the German project 'UMatch' supported by the German government and addressing youth employability; 2) the International Labour Organisation's ongoing work on developing a decent work agenda for the transition from the informal economy to formal employment; 3) the SOLID project on strengthening social dialogue in the region.

He concluded by stressing the need to develop an agenda for practical cooperation and the development of joint initiatives between civil society and the EU.

Ingrid Schwaiger presented DG NEAR's approach to and role in economic and private sector development in the southern neighbourhood. Specific priorities of economic cooperation are supported both via political dialogue and national/regional programmes. *'It is an important pillar of our cooperation both on the bilateral and regional levels'* she said. She also highlighted its overall objective as being *'inclusive and sustainable growth leading to job creation with a special attention to youth and women'*. The inclusiveness aspect focuses more on the attention to micro and very small businesses as engines for growth and job creation. The EU is supporting innovative approaches that have a strong potential to create jobs such as: support to start-ups, innovation, social enterprises and the social economy.

The Commission is supporting regional policy dialogue in the UfM with an emphasis on social development, including education. The interventions target (i) the macro-level with policy dialogue, (ii) the meso-level through intermediary institutions, and (iii) the micro-level by supporting final beneficiaries such as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For this purpose, the Commission is working with European financial institutions on access to finance for SMEs. This work involves multiple stakeholders such as the policy makers from EU countries (ministries responsible for SMEs, industries, financial institutions such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Agence française de Développement (AFD), etc.), female and young entrepreneurs, and institutions such as federations, chambers of commerce. She also referred to some ongoing projects meeting some of the needs:

'Social dialogue is an objective and is extremely important for the success of EU policies in meeting the needs of civil society' - **Jean Paul Tricart, Advisor, DG EMPLOYMENT, European Commission**

'We are interested in supporting new approaches and innovation with social impact that meets your needs'. — **Ingrid Schwaiger, Head of Sector, Economic Governance NEAR B2, European Commission**

1) regional programme on investment with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development;

2) the SANAD programme with access to finance and micro- finance;

3) the 'EU Initiative for Financial Inclusion' which provides support to women entrepreneurs and SMEs outside capital cities. She also stated that EU institutions are in the process of developing a new regional action on the social economy, addressing new policies, developing a regulatory framework and providing access to finance in the region. She added that the EU is interested in new approaches and initiatives with social impact.

Key points that emerged from the exchange of views between participants:

- Social dialogue is important to ensure that EU policies are successful in meeting the needs of civil society;
- The main challenge to be addressed with youth employment is to ensure a better matching of the supply and demand of labour;
- Coping with and reducing the size of the informal economy is important. The informal economy weighs down on the labour market and is detrimental to workers' rights, their career development and gender equality;
- There is a need to make the transition from the informal economy to formal employment, and to improve working conditions;
- The capacity of businesses to grow (especially the very small ones) is key in job creation;
- In-depth work on governance is necessary in the southern neighbourhood;

Main recommendations

- Produce reliable data on employment including in the informal economy;
- Develop an agenda for practical cooperation and joint initiatives;
- Further develop the role of civil society in formulating policy;

Focus on more innovative approaches which have a strong potential for job creation: these approaches include setting up start-ups and innovation, creating social enterprises and supporting the social economy.

Session 1 — Linking the job market to education and vocational training: helping youth find the right job and increasing young women's representation in the labour force

Moderator: Sara Amsassan, Dialogue fellow

Facilitator: Carine Elya, employability facilitator

Key speakers: Guggi Larea (World Bank), Lebanon; Michael Docherty, Head of Sector Political and Social Development, DG NEAR B2, European Commission; Claire Herrmann, policy officer, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Ms Herrmann listed the common challenges faced in Europe and the southern neighbourhood:

- 1) a high level of youth unemployment in both regions (at least for many EU Member States);
- 2) a skills mismatch: young people do not necessarily have the core skills needed in the job market (especially recent graduates); some cross-cutting competences should be developed at a younger age;
- 3) bad reputation of vocational and technical education.

She highlighted the specific features of the southern neighbourhood region, which differentiate it from the EU: 1) the demographic pressure: youth represents a bigger percentage of the population; 2) the gender question: there is a clear difference between the number of men and women on the job market; 3) the economic context: employment in the South is mainly based on 'interventions' and 'connections'.

The EU's response to the employment situation is mainly addressed through bilateral aid. However, DG Education and Culture (EAC) also mentioned two specific programmes:

- I) **Erasmus+**: which provides support for the reform of universities, support for European partnerships projects, and support for the mobility of students and professors from both sides of the Mediterranean. II) **Non-formal education**: support for youth through short exchanges (2 or 3 weeks) and some volunteering.

Michael Docherty from DG NEAR outlined the challenges faced by the region and underlined some data: a) one third of the population of the southern region is under 15 years old; b) two thirds of the working age population is inactive or unemployed; c) only 1 in 4 women is in the labour market; d) the indicator of young people not in employment, education, or training reached one third in the southern region; e) there is an inverse correlation between education and employment, with a very large percentage of graduates unemployed; e) micro-businesses constitute 95 % of all companies; f) there is limited access to training and skills development.

According to studies by the European Training Foundation, because of the limited access to training and developing skills, young people coming onto the labour market are not meeting the needs of businesses and face obstacles in starting their own businesses. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is highly centralised and government-led. Very often it is perceived as a second rate and second chance education system. The lack of integrated labour market information

systems is also an issue (people do not know what jobs are available, and employers do not know what people are looking for jobs). The Syrian crisis and the resulting refugee issue which contributes to the destabilisation of the labour market in Jordan and Lebanon were also mentioned.

Michael Docherty highlighted the role of civil society in supporting and constructively criticising government, providing expertise (delivering training, offering career guidance) and engaging in advocacy. He also outlined its role in helping to implement policy and modernise the regulatory framework of TVET.

Mr Laryea from the World Bank presented the '*Solutions for Youth Employment Programmes*' in Lebanon (www.s4ye.org) and the World Bank's 19 ongoing projects in the southern neighbourhood (such as the Lebanon national service volunteer programme offering soft skills training, including to vulnerable groups to reduce inequalities).

Main recommendations

To civil society organisations:

- Boost the role of CSOs in partnership building, policy implementation and government activities on employment.
- As CSOs represent a large number of local players and youth organisations, which can propose different perspectives from national ministries of labour, the economy or education, they should be given the space to advocate for innovative curricula, engage in skills anticipation and career guidance, and integrate gender issues as a priority.
- Give CSOs a greater role in delivering or advising on a strategy for training and education (whether formal or informal) that suits the needs of the labour market.
- Centralise labour market support in countries receiving high numbers of refugees in the southern region (mainly Lebanon and Jordan).

To the EU:

- While proposing regional solutions for growth, intensify the work and local collaboration on employment, taking into consideration the specific nature of the situation in each partner country and therefore responding to the need to adapt to local situations.
- Work on making the transition from school to work more efficient, develop competences approaches in education systems, cooperate with the private and public setors, and fight job discrimination against women.

Improve access to and the promotion of TVET in the region, getting CSOs to participate in this: Although vocational education and training exists in all the countries of the outhern region, it is highly centralised and government-led and very often only a second chance education system.

Session 2 — Business support organisations and innovation. Connecting the nodes to support SMEs and channelling capacities to innovative tech hub

Moderator: Ahmed El Damrawy, Team leader, CSF South.

Facilitator: Carine Elya, employability facilitator

Key speakers: Jihen Boutiba Mrad, Secretary general, Businessmed; Malin Elander, Head of Private Sector Development, DG NEAR B2, European Commission

Ms Elander presented some examples of DG NEAR's work to improve the private sector and develop SMEs. She highlighted that access to finance is very limited in the southern neighbourhood: there are 6 million micro to small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME) in the region with the potential to expand the economy and create jobs. MSMEs form the backbone of these countries' economies.

The review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2015 proposed several joint priorities for economic cooperation, including: 1) economic development for stabilisation; 2) improved economic

governance and support for structural reforms to improve competitiveness, stimulate inclusive growth and promote social development; 3) MSME development and initiatives promoting inclusive growth and employment. Ms Elander introduced the *EU initiative for financial inclusion*. It was prepared by the EU in partnership with key European financial institutions (the EIB, EBRD, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau –KfW-, AFD) in 2015 to expand financing to MSMEs. It consists of five complementary regional facilities which are financed through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF).

'EU funding will leverage more than EUR 1.5 billion in new financing for approximately 200 000 MSMEs.' - **Malin Elander, Head Private Sector Development, DG NEAR, European Commission**

Ms Boutina introduced the work of *BusinessMed* and its activities, which mainly focus on the private sector in the Mediterranean Basin. As one of the major bodies representing economic development, it aims to increase the exchanges between the EU and the Mediterranean countries. This involves increasing technological transfer, launching partnership actions and lobbying for business. She then shared BusinessMed's fruitful experience in the Euromed Invest project on promoting business and private investments in the Euro-Mediterranean area to foster an inclusive economic

EU response in Brussels to CSOs recommendation of Tunis

On the need for civil society to work with the private sector and advocate a reformulating of policies and legislation at government level, the EU advised civil society to advocate at national level for this purpose and debate it in international dialogues.

On the need for civil society in the southern neighbourhood to create more global communities for technological entrepreneurs and start-ups known as tech hubs, the EU response was to work on such hubs for innovation and start-ups; a regional programme has already been launched to deal with this.

development of the region and support the creation of MSMEs.

The debates which followed focused on support (including subsidies) to young entrepreneurs, the importance of promoting the corporate social responsibility of enterprises, and the importance of SMEs in creating jobs and reducing unemployment.

Further to the recommendations by the CSOs in Tunis to which the EU responded (see box above), the following additional recommendations were made.

Main recommendations

To civil society organisations:

- Boost the role of CSOs in advocating for an improved regulatory framework/ environment for innovation.

To the EU:

- Make access to finance easier in order to increase competitiveness and create jobs, supporting the development of innovative start-ups, and micro and small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
- Strengthen the partnership agreements and stimulate a stronger partnership among stakeholders for entrepreneurial innovation.
- Increase access to information on innovation ecosystems.

Session 3 — Social economy and social dialogue. Linking business to social enterprise; a regional approach

Moderator: Jihen Boutiba Mrad, Secretary General, BusinessMed.

Facilitator: Carine Elya, employability facilitator

Key speakers: Ziad Abdel Samad, Head of ANND, **Mustapha Tlili**, Executive Secretary ATUC, **Marco Lozano** — CEPES; **Vladimir Rojanski**, DG NEAR.

The social economy and social dialogue cover many different activities, providing a wide range of products and services across the single market and generating millions of jobs. During this session a thorough discussion took place on the social economy in the southern neighbourhood region. At the macroeconomic level, the discussion looked at the need to improve social dialogue. At the microeconomic level, it examined the need to support social entrepreneurship. The importance of social dialogue in the Arab states and the role of civil society in promoting social dialogue mechanisms in the southern neighbourhood were also covered. In this session, **Vladimir Rojanski** presented the launch of a new project on *‘Enhancing social entrepreneurship and inclusive growth in the southern neighbourhood’*.

It has been highlighted that in the last decade the **social economy** has been a source of job creation on the northern shore of the Mediterranean; it is a positive example that can be applied in the southern neighbourhood. The social economy can become an important tool to address unemployment and inequalities. CSOs highlighted that developing the social economy involves relevant human rights and environmental standards.

Some main points made during the discussions:

- it is important to develop social dialogue to strengthen/stabilise the role of an independent and free labour movement; an action plan for social dialogue needs to be drawn up;
- civil society needs to be involved in the discussions and in social dialogue; some matters are of common interest between economic and social players, especially when speaking about development of freedom of speech, etc.
- an enabling environment for independent and free labour organisations /trade unions needs to be promoted, and there needs to be work on the right to create associations and the freedom of assembly, the right of expression and the right to access resources.

Recommendations to the EU:

- promote an enabling environment where civil society organisations — including independent labour organisations and trade unions — can act freely and access resources;
- promote social dialogue that is inclusive with multiple stakeholders, and whenever possible, develop a policy agenda and action plan for socio-economic dialogue;

- continue to promote more freedom of assembly and free expression.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

Background and objectives

Both the new European consensus on development adopted in May 2017 and the European neighbourhood policy reviewed in 2015 recognise that human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance are vital for inclusive and sustainable development. They also recognise that these aspects must feature more prominently in all EU partnerships. The new consensus and revised neighbourhood policy renew EU support to civil society as a crucial component of any democratic system, promoting initiatives to foster pluralism and further participatory democracy and governance.

Building on the dialogues and main recommendations which emerged from the preparatory seminars in Tunis, the working group on 'human rights and governance' was designed to deepen the discussions on the EU and civil society partnership process. It was also designed to look at the ways and means for CSOs to engage with the EU in securing meaningful democracy and governance improvements at national and regional levels. The objective was to undertake a frank and constructive dialogue between representatives from the EU institutions and civil society on the EU's current cooperation agenda for the region, with a special focus on governance, anti-corruption, democratic transition, and how to make the Tunis recommendations operational.

Plenary dialogue on human rights and governance

Speakers: Said Salhi, LADDH, member of SAG; Toby Sexton, EEAS, Michael Docherty, DG NEAR B2, Alexandre Baron DG NEAR, CoTe on Human Rights.

Moderator: Nabila Hamza, Human Rights Facilitator

Rapporteur: Shahira Amin, Independent journalist, member of SAG

After a short introduction by the moderator, **Said Salhi** opened the session by recalling the main recommendations which had emerged from the thematic group on 'human rights and governance' of the Tunis preparatory seminars. He emphasised the challenging situation that defenders of human rights faced and the importance of the consultation and dialogue process between the EU institutions and civil society in the southern neighbourhood, given the instability and social tensions and shrinking space for non-state actors and human rights activists.

Both **Alexandre Baron** and **Toby Sexton** focused their intervention on the EU policies and instruments promoting democracy and human rights. They highlighted that the revised European neighbourhood policy (ENP) has led to an increase in financial assistance to southern countries for governance and civic participation. They reiterated the EU commitment to assist democratisation and improve governance in the region and to promote civil society's participation in monitoring and evaluating EU cooperation programmes. Civil society can and does help to develop these programmes. The rights-based approach, to which the EU has committed itself as a guiding principle of its financial assistance, gives civil society the opportunity to take more ownership of these programmes. Reporting on both aspects, political relations and financial assistance, is an attractive proposal that can be discussed further.

The panellists' presentations were followed by an open debate and exchanges with the participants, who raised some **key points**:

- Leverage on human rights is a key question. What kind of criteria/benchmarks/indicators does the EU take into account when allocating funds?
- There are dozens of CSOs defending human rights. Although a few initiatives already exist, there is an urgent need for more networking and a common platform for sharing best practices.
- Reporting is an attractive proposal to assess the situation of human rights and feed into the EU discussion that will lead to programming decisions.

Recommendations to the EU:

- The EU has to think about the best way to act at the regional level using available instruments and identify where its actions can be most effective. Every country has its own specific situation.
- The EU must prioritise human rights over security, since there cannot be security without respect for human rights; human rights must be a top priority in its migration policies.

Recommendations to both the EU and CSOs:

- There needs to be a discussion on the general impact of EU support for human rights policies over the last 10 years.

Session 1: Enhancing democratic transition and governance:

Tools and mechanisms to ensure the involvement of CSOs and national defenders of human rights in the implementation and periodic monitoring and evaluation of EU policies on democracy and governance.

Speakers: **Aref Jaffal** (Al Marsad) Palestine, **Toby Sexton** (EEAS), **Alexandre Baron** (DG NEAR, Human Rights)

Moderator: **Boubkeur Largou**, Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains

Rapporteur: **Shahira Amin** (Journalist Al Monitor, Egypt, member of SAG)

This first introductory session was dedicated to setting the scene and presenting an overview of the main challenges of the democratisation process in the MENA countries. There was a special focus on governance, anti-corruption, judicial reforms and elections. A lot of time was devoted to explaining the EU framework and priorities for cooperation on governance and the consolidation of democracy.

The participants also discussed the possibility of a formal mechanism/structure for CSOs to engage with the EU in securing meaningful democracy and improved governance at national and regional level and to ensure periodic monitoring and assessment of progress.

Aref Jaffal from Al Marsad (Palestine) opened the floor with an historical background on the origins and growth of the human rights movement in the Arab region, reviewing the political changes that

have occurred since the 'Arab Spring' in 2011. He pointed out that civil society organisations in the MENA region are faced today with significant challenges but also opportunities to influence the socio-political landscape and help improve good governance in the southern Mediterranean countries.

'We need to discuss the general impact of EU human rights policies over the last ten years. There has been no progress. A lot of money has been spent on human rights programmes and projects, but the human rights situation has deteriorated rather than improved'.

A participant

Contrary to expectations, EU efforts to improve democracy, freedom and respect of human rights have not been successful on the ground. On the global stage, there is a significant state backlash against activists and CSOs. In many countries of the region, CSOs are facing existential crises, which include problems caused by anti-terrorism and security laws in addition to a deteriorating funding environment. Aref noted that EU attention has been diverted away from violations of the Palestinian people's human rights by the Israeli government, the blockade and the crackdown on Palestinian activists. There is little criticism of Israel. In their presentations, **Toby Sexton, Alexandre Baron and**

Michael Docherty (DG NEAR) highlighted the different EU programmes and actions to advance human rights in the current difficult context of transformational changes. The objective of European neighbourhood policy is stabilisation. However, this means different things to different people. Stabilisation is not about maintaining status quo or avoiding change. It means advancing issues of mutual interest (economic development, migration, security and respect of human rights). Stability will not be achieved if we do not embed human rights in all we do. Therefore, the concept of stabilisation in the ENP review puts human rights, governance and democracy as the first priorities.

The revised neighbourhood policy is based on the concept of differentiation, while previous policy was uniform and standardised. Every country needs different relations with the EU; this is why the

'Civil society is an important stakeholder for the EU, and CSOs must be involved in all discussions on determining the EU's relationship with partner countries. We have made a start on the political side, but we can always do better, consult civil society in a better way and involve them more efficiently in policy making'

*Alexandre Baron
(DG NEAR, CoTe Human Rights)*

EU is trying to customise its relationship with the local situation on the basis of shared interest.

Human rights are at the heart of neighbourhood policy. Baron recalled that approximately EUR 40 million have been budgeted for the southern neighbourhood countries for 2014-2017 under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). Under ENI, approximately 20-25 % of the country allocations (and 20 % for the regional allocation) are dedicated to support the rule of law, human rights and democracy. In July 2017, ongoing ENI programmes in these fields amounted to approximately EUR 440 million.

It will take time before the achievements and impact of the revised neighbourhood policy are known. Although the EU has succeeded in customising relations with different countries, more progress is needed.

Key points made:

- A regional forum or centre is needed to back up and support coordination among CSOs and strengthen networking in the south.

- New and regional-based coalitions between diverse civil society formations are needed to best capitalise on what is currently a generational opportunity to demand transformational political, social and economic change.
- CSO capabilities need to be increased so CSOs can become not only service providers but also actors of change.
- Reports by CSOs are a very important tool for monitoring progress.
- A rights-based approach is an excellent tool for involving CSOs in financial assistance programmes.

Recommendations to the EU:

- The EU should consult and involve CSOs as key protagonists more proactively in EU cooperation policy. When CSOs monitor and share programmes, there is a sense of ownership.
- Whenever possible, the EU should hold tripartite meetings (EU, civil society and government) to improve dialogue and cooperation. Tunisia's tripartite dialogue is a good example to follow. The tripartite meetings should have the same importance as bilateral meetings.
- The capacity of EU delegations to deal with CSOs should be increased, since the delegations currently have limited capabilities for this.
- The EU must work directly with local/grassroots CSOs without middlemen. Grassroots organisations are not consulted, and it is the middlemen who decide on all issues.
- In its support for free elections, the EU must consult the new election monitoring bodies that have emerged in the region since the Arab Spring.

Recommendations to CSOs:

- CSOs should work as monitors and watchdogs of EU cooperation agreements and oversee their implementation

To be further discussed

Human Rights conditionality: to what extent should the EU apply it? Should the EU suspend all assistance to countries that do not respect human rights? The EU needs to find a balance, applying conditionality but not cutting financial aid completely, as the first to suffer are the people.

Session 2: Violence against women and protection of women's rights: Why should civil society advocate for the signing of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence?

Speakers: Sarah GJERDING, Gender Programme Officer, EuroMed Rights; Ilaria Brazzoduro, Legal Officer, DG JUSTICE / Gender Equality (D2)

Moderator: Ahmed Galai, Human Rights activist (Tunisia)

Rapporteur: George Gagelea

'There is a general backlash against women's rights. We are in the 21st century and yet, whether in the private sphere or the public sphere, we witness unacceptable acts of gender-based violence on a daily basis. The Istanbul Convention will allow the EU and its Member States to develop and strengthen the prevention, prosecution and elimination of violence against women and girls and domestic violence.'

Mrs Ilaria Brazzoduro, EC, DG JUSTICE and Gender Equality

Combating violence against women is one of the European Commission's priorities for 2017. This is why in 2017 the Commission signed the **Istanbul Convention** and launched a yearlong campaign to raise awareness of all forms of violence towards women.

This session was devoted to exploring actions needed to end gender-based violence and protect women who are victims of violence. Specific attention was given to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which provides the most progressive and comprehensive international standard on combating violence against women and girls. The Convention recognises that

violence against women constitutes a violation of their human rights. It also addressed violence against women through measures aimed at preventing violence, protecting and supporting its victims, and prosecuting the perpetrators. The role of civil society in advocating for the convention and encouraging their governments to ratify and implement it was also addressed.

In her presentation, Mrs **Ilaria Brazzoduro** outlined the Istanbul Convention and the implications of joining it, and briefly reviewed the role of the EU in combating violence against women. She noted that this Convention, which specifically targets violence against women and domestic violence, has a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach and is legally binding for the countries that ratify it. Its signing by the Commission sends a very positive signal to CSOs in the region who are working to end violence against women.

Sarah GJERDING, from the EuroMed Rights working group on violence against women (VAW), focused her presentation on the EuroMed Rights' campaign on the Istanbul Convention. It aims to raise awareness of the convention and the specific role of civil society towards it. She noted that the Convention offers practical insights into how citizens and NGOs can monitor its implementation and bring about real change.

To assess and improve the Convention's implementation by the States, two distinct bodies are interacting: The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) and the Committee of the Parties, which is composed of representatives of the parties to the Istanbul Convention. NGOs can turn to GREVIO to address their reports, observations and alerts about serious, expanded or recurrent acts of violence, which should be covered by the Convention. The two interventions were followed by an open discussion with the participants.

Key points made

- The concept of violence against women needs to be broadened to be more comprehensive, including physical, legal and psychological violence/ sexual harassment and abuse.
- The role of the media in combating violence against women needs to be expanded: giving voices to women — victims of violence and reporting the abuses.

Recommendations to the EU:

- Support the creation of a Regional Observatory on Violence Against Women in southern countries, which will report on the abuses against women and promote an active involvement of civil society at regional level.

Recommendations to CSOs:

- CSOs have to advocate and exert pressure on their governments to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention, and urge them to bring national legislation in line with the Convention.
- Fight the instrumentalisation of religion to justify continuous gender-based violence; religious leaders have a key role to play in that.
- Promote education on fighting violence against women

Session 3: Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and preventing discrimination:

What strategies can civil society and the EU pursue to prevent discrimination of minorities and LGBT in particular?

Key speakers: TransHomosDz (Algeria), SHAMS (Tunisia), Marina MARCHETTI, DEVCO B1.

Moderator: Anelia Stefanova, CEE Bankwatch Network (Italy)

This session was devoted to the EU's diplomatic efforts to eliminate discriminatory laws and policies against LGBT persons and support and protect human rights defenders. The speakers analysed different strategies and actions of civil society organisations and human rights activists to assess LGBT human rights issues, protect vulnerable groups and fight various forms of discrimination. They also looked at the international and regional instruments that are relevant for the rights of minority groups.

The speakers emphasised that discrimination against LGBT persons is still widely accepted in many parts of the world and particularly in Muslim countries. This could be seen in the policies that spread intolerance and discrimination based on sexual identity and in existing legislation that criminalises homosexuality. LGBT persons constitute a vulnerable group. They continue to be victims of persecution, discrimination, bullying and gross ill-treatment, often involving extreme forms of violence that include torture and murder. The speakers urged human rights activists to mobilise to change national legislation and force governments to respect the human rights of LGBT people.

'The EU is particularly concerned that in some countries sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex are criminalised and are liable to be punished with imprisonment or the death penalty. In other countries governments actively seek to limit freedom of assembly, association and expression of LGBTI persons.'

Marina MARCHETTI, DEVCO B1

Marina MARCHETTI highlighted EU efforts to uphold the human rights of LGBTI persons — who should be able to live free from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. She noted that in June 2013, the EU adopted the 'Guidelines for supporting LGBTI persons' human rights', to be used by EU staff around the world in connection with human rights country strategies and civil society organisations. The guidelines are a way for the EU to proactively promote the human rights of LGBTI persons, react to their violations,

and better understand and combat any structural discrimination they might face. In doing so, the guidelines aim to further strengthen and support the EU's human rights policy in general.

Recommendations to the EU:

- Help build solidarity bridges between LGBT CSOs and human rights activists at national and regional level to protect the rights of sexual minorities and individual victims of

discrimination.

- Boost the capacity of CSOs to adopt a human rights-based approach and promote and protect LGBT people's rights.
- Encourage human rights organisations to submit alternative reports on discrimination and abuses against LGBT persons.
- Actively support the freedom of assembly, association and expression of LGBTI persons.
- Increase support and funding of LGBT CSOs to carry out programmes on awareness raising, education and advocacy.

Recommendations to CSOs:

- Organise a regional thematic forum on LGBT rights in the southern neighbourhood countries in order to build common strategies; encourage networking and develop a solid lobbying campaign for LGBT persons at regional level.
- Monitor the media to avoid hate speech and homophobia and prevent violence and discrimination against LGBT persons. The media can be a positive vector as well as a blocking factor.
- Develop information and education programmes about discrimination.

4. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

On the third and last day of the seminar, participants were given the opportunity to discuss cross-cutting issues during a two-hour session; four themes previously identified were debated simultaneously:

- **Empowering young voices** through education and employment;
- **Unlocking the potential of women** in societies and for resilience;
- How the **media** can work better with civil society;
- **Climate change and environment**; risks and opportunities for civil society.

4.1. Empowering young voices through education and employment

Moderator: **Salvatore Nigro**, Global Vice President and CEO Europe — Education For Employment (EFE)

Speakers: **Ilhem Kerdoudi**, Chief Executive Officer, Fondation Marocaine de l'Education pour l'Emploi; **Ghadeer Khuffash**, Chief Executive Officer, Jordan Education For Employment

Rapporteur: **Manal Benani**, Young Mediterranean Voices

Salvatore Nigro introduced the session. He presented the main results of a 2016 survey which revealed that 86 % of youth would, if given the opportunity, emigrate due to a lack of professional opportunities, low income earning potential, and poor living conditions. The survey also revealed that 72.3 % got their job through personal or family contacts, and 37 % think studies prepared them for the labour market. Youth unemployment in the region is among the highest in the world at 29.7 %, double the world average of 13.6 %. Young female unemployment is particularly striking at 45.6 %⁴.

Nigro highlighted the mismatches at the heart of high youth unemployment rates, such as (i) the misalignment between the skills taught in local education institutions and the needs of the labour market, (ii) discrepancies between the types of jobs that youth are brought up to expect and what is available in the job market, and (iii) the mismatch between the number of jobs that require social connections to secure the job, and the ambitious, able youth desperate to have these jobs. Youth with limited social capital, young women in particular, are the worst off. EFE has been helping these young people through demand-driven training programmes to link them with the world of work and develop their professional skills.

Ilhem Kerdoudi presented the specific case of Morocco, where the EFE's programme has helped to fill the gap between job supply and demand, providing the necessary technical and soft-skills through a very demand-driven model of employment. The programme has impacted close to 20 000 young people. To ensure its success, the programme was implemented in partnership with various ministries, the national employment agency and the confederation of business.

⁴ See Background note in Annex 5.

Ghadeer Khuffash highlighted the specific case of Jordan, which has a very high rate of youth unemployment exacerbated by the Syrian refugee crisis. Refugees can work only in selected sectors determined by the government, such as the hospitality sector. At the same time, the private sector cannot find the talent it needs to grow and expand. In Jordan, EFE is working with both Jordanians and refugees, having tailored its training programme to match the needs of employers. The programme helps to identify, recruit and train young people in Jordan's 'pockets of poverty'. Entrepreneurship is also a focus in those areas where there are no jobs available. The retail and tourism sectors continue to hire and have potential for growth.

The moderator then gave the floor to **the audience** which, after asking many questions about the work of EFE in various countries of the region and recognising its many successes, **made the following points:**

- The culture and creative sectors should also be treated as generators of employment; creative training courses and workshops promoting art and culture should be seen as a way to empower youth.
- It is important to instil a civic sense in the young population to have them contribute back in various forms to the community.
- A culture of entrepreneurship needs to be instilled from a young age to stimulate creativity.
- There needs to be a link between the creation of employment and impact in the community: if a company invests in a socially responsible manner, this must lead to the creation of employment that has an impact in the community.
- A person from Palestine also thanked EFE for the work in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where unemployment is very severe for people below the age of 30. Freedom of mobility also affects the possibility of working in different parts of the country.

The major recommendations to the EU :

- Allow private sector and CSOs to apply together for grants/contracts;
- Invest heavily in programmes that generate employment in the region;
- Listen to the needs of the employers when developing employment programmes;
- Create platforms to share information about the various employment programmes in the region.

Recommendations to CSOs include:

- Engage more in local decision-making processes;
- Be more coordinated to integrate structured dialogue on vocational education and training (VET) policies, in order to give advice and provide vision.

4.2. How the media can work better with civil society

Moderator: **Shahira Amin**, Independent journalist

Speakers: **Heinke Veit** — Project Manager — Media and Communication MENA — European Commission; **Myria Antoniadou** — Communication consultant and trainer — INTRAC; **Aissam Benaissa**, Young Mediterranean Voices; **Giulio Pecora**, International Media Consulting and EuroMed Media Network (EMMN).

Rapporteur: **Lourdes Pulicino**, Assistant Lecturer at University of Malta

Background

It is assumed that a vibrant civil society sector and independent media can help create and sustain a more democratic political and social culture.

The common thread between the media and CSOs is that they both have a role to play in bringing about change and improving the lives of citizens in the societies in which they operate. Therefore, they are expected to have a shared interest in working together as ‘watchdogs’ and ‘creators’ of change.

The situation with the media and CSOs in the southern Mediterranean is challenging. They are both navigating in a shrinking space. There is also a general mistrust of the media, and above all for mainstream media, including international broadcasters. But credibility is also a factor for independent media and especially social media, which is the medium of choice for the young population in the region. For CSOs, credibility can also be a factor, as they are not always considered to be independent organisations. They sometimes operate under the label of ‘foreign agents’ due to external funding and are not necessarily an alternative voice to turn to.

Despite this, however, the commonality of interests between the media and CSOs should be evident. **All efforts should be directed at encouraging much needed closer interaction between the media and CSOs in the southern neighbourhood.**

The session kicked off with Ms Veit noting the EU initiatives that already exist for this purpose. A vibrant discussion yielded a number of **recommendations from the participants**.

- (1) While **training** for both the media and CSOs has been going on for some time, there is always a need for more. **Building capacity remains fundamental** but all training should include how to better build bridges and networking skills. Journalists and CSOs need to know each other’s best entry points (Who to approach?); they need to be aware of significant moments where collaboration is crucial (Are there ‘best’ moments for the media to talk to CSOs and vice versa, Ramadan? During enactment of legislation?); they need to develop better partnerships on the ground (in camps, for example).
- (2) The EU has to expand beyond training and activate mechanisms, tools, equipment, and most importantly **platforms for there to be improved relations and cooperation**. As part of this reaching out, it was considered very important that the **EU help to create a creative space where new, independent media can be showcased and amplified**.

- (3) The EU should do more than just bring together CSOs and the media. It should consider facilitating a tripartite dialogue between CSOs, the media, and the governments of the region. This is considered the most challenging form of dialogue. But under EU auspices, an initial conversation could be launched on difficult issues like an enabling legal environment and protection of journalists. This should be complimentary to the EU's institutional dialogue with the governments of the region where the main focus should be on an enabling legal environment.
- (4) In the continuous effort to develop closer relations between the media and CSOs in the southern neighbourhood, the Anna Lindh Foundation's idea of a media observatory continues to be useful. The observatory should examine how the media cover cross-cultural issues and provide evidence-based resources and material for journalists and the media. It should also provide sources for networking for CSOs and act as a repository of good practice in journalism. The observatory can be the permanent tool that is missing in the region.

4.3. Climate change and environment; risks and opportunities for civil society

Moderator: **Frederica PSCE**, European Commission, DG NEAR

Speakers: **Marta Moren Abat**, European Commission, DG environment; **Matthieu Ballu**, European Commission, DG Climate; **Samia Zayani**, Water Dynamic.

Rapporteur: **Samia Zayani**

Marta Moren Abat presented the Union for the Mediterranean's (UfM) water agenda as an agreed interministerial regional water agenda which should lead to a regional water policy framework.

Samia Zayani presented the impact of climate change on water and an innovative management technique to meet the challenges of water scarcity by involving various local stakeholders. The management technique includes establishing a local water agenda between local authorities and CSOs and developing a national strategy with the Ministry of Agriculture and Water to mobilise and collaborate with civil society .

Matthieu Ballu presented the EU's climate action in the Mediterranean region and discussed ratification of the Paris Agreement and the national strategies for its implementation in some of the southern Mediterranean countries.

The debate that followed highlighted the **following points**:

- The water sector should be a priority in the region, and water security should be highlighted, as water scarcity is a pressure on and threat for the southern region and its population.
- Climate change has an impact on water, and water scarcity is leading to serious stress on soil and environment and more flooding, deterioration of water quality and pollution. These threats cause food shortages, economic problems, social unrest and eventually lead to migration.

- Climate change policy can create positive dynamics, including creating employment for youth.
- The Paris Agreement has in general had a positive effect across the globe.
- Cities and the business sector are important in climate change.

Main recommendations for CSOs:

- CSOs should try to influence their government to make water and climate change a priority for EU funding .
- More work needs to be done to identify the right players in each country and create new partnerships and collaboration on water and the environment.
- To resolve water problems and respond to water security in the South, CSOs need to develop new innovative water management techniques adapted to the threats and challenges the region faces. For example, the Collaborative Open Online Platform could be used as a regional tool for prevention, monitoring, collaborating and networking.
- CSOs, local and national players should work together on a national mobilisation strategy for water and climate change.
- CSOs need more funds to build their capacities to better implement the Paris Agreement.
- CSOs should participate in, monitor and contribute to the implementation of the UfM water agenda.

Recommendations for the EU:

- Water and climate change should be priorities in EU neighbourhood policies. The EU can help to strengthen government and CSO capacities in that regard.
- Climate change and water issues should be included in tripartite dialogue between the EU, government and CSOs and in regional dialogue between CSOs and the EU.
- More civil society organisations and networks should be involved in and contribute to preparation of the water agenda, and participate in UfM ministerial meetings for water.
- The EU should help to build inclusive partnerships at local level between governments and CSOs to react and respond to climate change, aiming at sustainability. The EU should also work with cities and the business sector for more technical exchanges between North and South, and for cooperation in water and climate change through inclusive approaches.
- The EU should help allocate funds to local organisations working on climate change in remote areas.
- The EU should help allocate funds for water security and resilience.

4.4. Unlocking the potential of women in societies and for resilience

Moderator: **Shada Islam**, Director Europe & Geopolitics, Friends of Europe

Speakers: **Mary Freehill**, Irish Representative, Committee of the Regions (CoR); **Emilie Vidal**, Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation (EMWF); **Sara Amsassan**, Young Mediterranean Voices

Background and objectives

All EU external policies have women's rights and gender equality as a central focus. In 2015 the EU endorsed a new gender action plan for its activities on gender equality and women's empowerment in EU's external relations for 2016-2020. The aim is to help partner countries, especially developing, enlargement and neighbouring countries, to achieve tangible results in gender equality, which is at the core of the new sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted at the UN Summit.

The objective of the cross-cutting session on 'Unlocking the potential of women in societies and for resilience' was to discuss the inequalities and main challenges women face today in the southern Mediterranean countries. The aim was also to look at the efforts of the EU, governments and civil society to achieve equality between women and men.

Setting the scene

After making a short introduction, the moderator of the session, **Mary Freehill**, Irish Representative (CoR), presented an overview of the main trends in women empowerment and gender equality in the southern Mediterranean. She recalled that the issues women face in this region are similar to those faced by the rest of the world. If legislative barriers to gender equality are few, a big implementation gap remains on the ground. Gender-based violence knows no class or geographical boundaries, and its prevalence is still a big concern. She observed that there are still significant gaps in the data on women's status and rights in many countries of the region, making it difficult to have a comprehensive and objective picture.

However, she noted that there are some encouraging trends, such as the higher number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training. Education gaps between men and women are narrowing, and the situation of literacy is improving, although the picture in rural areas is less encouraging. Overall, gender gaps remain, and women in the labour market are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions.

On average, less than 25 % of women participate in the economy. This cannot be explained by education alone but also by the lack of facilities for the care of children and the elderly, as women are still regarded as primary care-takers. Gender stereotyping of roles results in women working more in services than in industry, with a greater tendency to work in part-time jobs and a greater risk of precarity. The lack of reliable, safe and affordable public transport is also a major obstacle to women's participation in the labour force and something the local authorities can address. For women entrepreneurs, access to credit and finance is a key problem in all southern Mediterranean

countries, in addition to a lack of training and mentoring programmes targeting women.

Local and national government employment policies should enable the promotion of better employment conditions that meet the needs of women. The League of Arab States has also a major role to play in increasing women's economic participation and providing support and adequate structures to women entrepreneurs.

On the political side, Mary Freehill noted that there are encouraging signs as women's political participation is increasing at the national and local levels. A growing number of countries are applying quota systems, but significant barriers to women's participation in public/political leadership and influential positions in politics, the judiciary, etc. remain.

How to work with civil society to make progress?

Emilie Vidal then presented the regional approach of the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation on how to work with civil society to make progress for women. The objective of this approach is to improve coordination between different stakeholders in the southern Mediterranean region, promote an agenda for women, analyse the local level and disseminate information more broadly. The CSO WINS project, implemented for more than 3 years in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya and Jordan, is a good example of what CSOs can do to improve women's empowerment in the region.

Civil society and women's groups are key players and can do a lot to bring about the changes needed today in the MENA region (build links and promote cooperation between CSOs and local/national authorities, universities; produce data that help justify actions; empower local CSOs to strengthen their capacities; mobilise youth; form alliances with the media and opinion leaders).

After **Sara Amsassan** gave her brief testimony on the importance of building the capacities of young women, the panelists' presentations were followed by an **open debate** and exchanges with the participants. Several **key points were made**:

- The main problem for gender equality in the MENA region is the gap between legislation and its implementation on the ground. However, the discriminatory legislation in place is still a key issue for women's empowerment. In many countries, constitutions have a clause linked to religion, and most of the family laws and other types of legislation are based on Sharia law, constituting a real barrier for women's rights and emancipation.
- The shrinking space for civil society has an important gender dimension. Many women's NGOs are working in a difficult environment. They are often under attack and lacking funds and support.
- The rise of extremist religious ideology and activism and its impact on women's status is another issue of concern.
- Religious leaders could be a good vehicle to reach out to the public to promote gender equality and fight discrimination against women (the case of Morocco), as they have legitimacy and an important influence on public opinion.
- The role of the media in addressing gender stereotypes and in fighting discrimination against women is essential. The portrayal of women in the media has to be more positive to encourage young girls.

- Socio-economic violence against women, particularly in the textile sector and garment industry where the labour force is highly feminised, has to be analysed and addressed. In many Arab countries, the garment industry is one of the lowest paid sectors and offers poor working conditions. There is also a clear gender segregation, with women mostly found in the lowest-skilled, lowest-paid and most precarious jobs.
- Education is crucial to address gender-stereotypes, give women confidence, and raise awareness. Curricula have to promote gender equality, and religious education must not undermine these efforts.
- Art and culture can be important vehicles to reach out to the public and raise awareness, to change the image and perception of women; also cooperation with the media is extremely important to promote role models.
- The League of Arab States has a major role to play in promoting gender equality, increasing women's economic and political participation and providing support and adequate structures to women entrepreneurs.

Main recommendations

To CSOs:

- Advocate for comprehensive and coherent legislation ensuring gender equality and equal opportunities, and more particularly, for local and national employment policies enabling the promotion of better employment conditions for women. Monitor the implementation of these laws and policies.
- Work with the local authorities who can introduce policies to raise awareness on the role of women, fight gender stereotypes, provide services for childcare, safe and reliable public transport, services to promote women entrepreneurs, etc.
- Engage religious leaders in their fight to overcome gender-stereotypes and achieve gender equality.
- Cooperate with universities and research institutions to gather and analyse data on the situation of women at local and national level.

To the EU:

- Ensure that trade agreements are gender-sensitive and that European investors contribute to women's empowerment rather than undermine it.
- Encourage the governments of their partner countries to lift their reservations on CEDAW, and change their national laws on inheritance and VAW to be in line with international conventions.
- Provide financial support for data analysis on the situation of women at local and national level.
- Create a sustainable communication strategy and work with local civil society in addressing this on a local level.

4.5. Conclusions on cross-cutting sessions

The presentation of the recommendations of the four cross-cutting sessions in plenary and the

exchanges between participants which directly followed highlighted some **common conclusions/recommendations** for all groups:

- It is important to act and create partnerships at local level; the EU should support and strengthen partnerships between CSOs and local authorities.
- It is important to create platforms/spaces for dialogue; the EU should continue supporting tripartite dialogue between the EU, CSOs (including the media) and government.
- Culture can play an extremely important role in development processes; it should be included as a cross-cutting issue in the next Forum.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

During the afternoon of the third day of the Forum, rapporteurs presented **the main conclusions and recommendations** of the four thematic groups to the participants, which included a high-level panel of EU representatives.

3.1. STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE AND BUILDING STABILITY

What came across in all three workshops on security and resilience was the **need for the EU to engage more with CSOs** in all the sub-themes, and the **need to include youth in all steps of programming and analysis**. This was especially the case for youth's vulnerability of being caught up in violent extremism. Throughout, there was much discussion of **the need for CSOs to be more engaged with EU delegations** for early warning, P/CVE or CP. This is a two-way street: the EU has to provide more information and CSOs need to work closer with the delegations. The EU delegations could play a greater role in building trust and partnerships between different players, including civil society groups, and between civil society and national and local authorities. Finally, there was an emphasis on the need for much improved early warning of potential new shocks, such as water and food security problems in the Middle East. These can lead to domestic instability, violent extremism, migration or conflict. The development of resilience to these shocks requires a **multidisciplinary and 'landscape' approach** to detect the triggers early on.

Many **recommendations and conclusions** were developed for each workshop. However, civil society identified some key ones for presentation to the plenary:

Security sector reform (SSR)

- CSOs need to preserve their advocacy role. But also, as the space is shrinking and they are faced with more complex political conditions, CSOs should try new strategic approaches to develop trust with authorities;
- the EU can develop a form of dialogue on SSR that involves governments and CSOs in the country. The EU should be facilitator of this dialogue.

Preventing/Countering violent extremism (PVE/CVE)

- The key is to understand the drivers behind extremism and the context it grows in, rather than dealing with it directly. The partnership between the North and South of the Mediterranean in fighting violent extremism should be strengthened, and good practices should be shared.
- Include youth in developing EU programming to combat violent extremism and stress the importance of early age intervention for PVE and conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention (CP)

- Involve CSOs more in early warning, increasing their capacities in this regard, and working to translate early warning into 'early action'.
- As discussed in all sessions, CSOs would be more effective in influencing EU programming if they approached EU delegations on these issues as groups or networks.

3.2. MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

The thematic group on migration and mobility centred its discussion on three issues: (i) **legal migration and mobility**, (ii) **humanitarian and protection imperatives on migration**, and (iii) **building tools and mechanisms for monitoring by the EU and CSOs of international responses**. The key points and conclusions which resulted from these sessions are as follows:

- In the various forms of dialogue and action designed by the EU to respond to the migratory crisis since 2015, CSOs share a positive view of the role and place the EU has entrusted to civil society. However, its representatives call for the establishment of an institutional consultation and dialogue framework between the EU and CSOs from the southern neighbourhood. They want this framework so that CSOs can be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the EU programmes and actions. They also called on the EU to ensure that medium and small-sized CSOs are eligible for direct funding under regional and multi-sectoral programmes.
 - A joint EU/CSOs observatory should be created for shared monitoring and evaluation of the various mechanisms and programmes adopted at the EU/African Union and EU/Turkey summits on migration governance.
 - To dispel the impression of a ‘Fortress Europe’ and do more to build a space for dialogue and cooperation between the EU and its southern neighbourhood, CSOs called for more opportunities to promote legal migration and mobility between both regions. This should not only benefit elites but also be open to all categories of society in the south, including the poorer and less qualified. They also called upon the EU to improve coordination with Member States to facilitate the mobility of nationals from southern partner countries to the EU.
 - The participants welcomed the EU’s new approach to handling the underlying causes of migration in the countries of departure and promoting inclusive development for migrants and refugees in the transit and receiving countries. However, CSO representatives underlined the need to protect and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in all programmes, actions and initiatives led by the EU and the various stakeholders (countries of origin and transit, international organisations).
- Finally, for the various sub-themes linked to migration and mobility, the participants raised the urgent need to **set a precise action plan** and **clear deadlines** to implement the Tunis and Brussels recommendations.

3.4. REDUCING INEQUALITIES

The thematic group on reducing Inequalities focused on employability and inclusive economic growth, and the workshops were organised around three issues: (i) **linking the job market to education and vocational training** (ii) **supporting SMEs and innovation: channelling capacities to innovate and create hubs**, and (iii) the **social economy and social dialogue**; The key points and conclusions which resulted from these sessions are as follows:

- make the transition from the education system to the job market more efficient, while considering gender balance and countries' specific characteristics.
- bring in innovations in the design of curricula, engage in skills anticipation and career guidance; get involved in policy agendas at national level and enter in dialogues with governments, and the public and private sectors.
- advocate locally and internationally for improving the regulatory framework for innovation;
- Advocate for developing policies and programmes 'to provide alternatives for workers to help them move to the formal economy and protect their rights'Promote the potential of the social economy as a vector of job creation and a tool to address unemployment and inequalities in the region. It should include relevant human rights and environmental standards.
- Strengthen social dialogue to stabilise independent and free trade unions and employers' organisations; 'and include civil society as part of a multipartite dialogue.

Recommendations to the EU:

- Continue supporting access to higher education and VET in coordination with the private sector in particular, so that the job market is more accessible to youth and women especially.
- Support sustainable solutions for social and economic growth, and southern innovation in international policy discussions.
- Continue support for entrepreneurship, the social economy and SMEs.
- Promote an enabling environment where civil society organisations — including independent labour organisations and trade unions — can act freely and access resources.
- Promote an inclusive and multi-stakeholder social dialogue and whenever possible, an agenda and action plan for this dialogue.
- Continue to promote freedom of assembly and free expression.

3.4. HUMAN RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE

The various workshops recognised that EU support to civil society, human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance are vital for inclusive and sustainable development and should feature more prominently in all EU partnerships. The workshops also reviewed national policies and EU efforts and programmes to improve democracy, freedom and respect of human rights in the MENA region. The participants examined these from very different angles, confronting views, specific experiences and case studies, and from different perspectives, looking at the political, economic, social and institutional viewpoints.

The confrontation of different views, approaches and perspectives and the discussions that followed led to the following main points:

Main conclusions/recommendations to the EU:

- Always prioritise human rights over security;
- Consult and involve CSOs in a more proactive way in EU cooperation policy;
- Support the creation of a Regional Observatory on Violence Against Women in southern countries to alert on women abuses and promote an active involvement of civil society at regional level.

Leverage on human rights and human rights indicators in allocating EU funds and assistance are key questions. Whereas the principle of human rights conditionality in the EU partnership agreements with southern Mediterranean governments has to be maintained, it should be applied carefully. The principle has to answer the specific needs of each country, particularly in highly volatile political contexts.

Main conclusions/recommendations to CSOs:

- There is an urgent need for a regional forum/ common platform or centre to back up, share best practices and support coordination among CSOs and strengthen networking in the south.
- CSOs should work as monitors and watchdogs of EU cooperation agreements.
- CSOs should engage more in shadow reporting to assess human rights situations and feed into the EU discussion that will lead to programming decisions.
- A regional thematic forum on LGBT rights in the southern neighbourhood countries should be organised in order to build solidarity bridges and common strategies between LGBT CSOs and human rights activists at national and regional levels and protect individual victims of discrimination.

Also, given the deteriorating situation of civic space and the related human rights violations in the region, **the participants expressed a need to further discuss** the way EU policy will impact the needed democratisation process.

Integrating the role of civil society in EU policy

Open debate on and EU responses to the CSOs' main recommendations

Key note address by Mr. Popowski, Deputy Director General NEAR

After hearing the main recommendations by CSOs and underlining the usefulness of the 3 days of debates, Mr. Popowski noted the current paradox: civil society remains an indispensable partner for the EU, but circumstances on the ground are deteriorating, and the space is shrinking more and more for CSOs; because of this 'shrinking space', empowerment of civil society has become a real challenge. He mentioned the 'European Endowment for Democracy', a grant-giving organisation that supports local players of democratic change in the European neighbourhood and beyond as an answer to this challenge.

On **migration**, in response to the third recommendation stressing the need to always respect and protect fundamental human rights, he recalled that the EU applies a 'human rights-based approach' to all its projects and programmes. He also recalled that **security sector reform (SSR)** is a priority for the EU in the neighbourhood region and mentioned the 'European Investment Plan and EU Trust Funds' as instruments for economic growth.

M. Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global issues at EEAS, insisted on the role that civil society has to play, as it is 'the live blood' of our democratic societies.

In the debate that followed, questions were raised on how to develop **tripartite dialogue** (probably not possible in all countries of the southern neighbourhood), and how to ensure that a '**rights-based approach**' is always applied. He noted that finding the right balance with this approach was not always easy.

On the **civil society hub being prepared**, it was stressed that if the hub were led by a European NGO, guarantees should be ensured that CSOs from the South will be fully involved. Christian Leffler reassured the audience that the EU took the process of selecting the applicants very seriously, and that once in place, the management of the hub will be closely monitored.

Questions were raised about the role of the receiving countries in the 'Trust Fund for Refugees'; it was clarified that although the EU supports the national authorities of the receiving countries, they do not replace them or impose solutions on them.

Next steps of the process

by Emma Udwin, Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn

On the next steps of the dialogue process, although the southern neighbourhood is experiencing an unprecedented crisis, and budgets and space are shrinking, the EU will always maintain strong support for civil society.

Ms Udwin informed the audience about the next steps of the selection process of the call for proposals for the civil society hub. She concluded the session by expressing her great satisfaction that the EU/CS dialogue process for the southern neighbourhood will be led by CSOs themselves, and attended by the EU, in 2018.

Concluding the event, Commissioner Hahn delivered the following video message for the Forum: 'Civil Society is part of the EU's most important partners in our southern neighbourhood, in ensuring sustainable social and economic development.

This Forum reaches a defining moment this year.

It allows moving our common agenda forward on youth and resilience, but also on the key challenges reflected in the European neighbourhood policy: migration, human rights and governance, security, and reducing inequalities.

This forum is indeed an important opportunity for the EU to hear and respond to young people's aspirations and concerns.

Finally, the Forum is setting the ground for the creation of a regional hub to be owned by civil society: it will bring new platforms for dialogue and set policy agendas reflecting civil society's key concerns for their region, to be addressed with the EU and authorities, including regional bodies such as the Union for the Mediterranean.'

The Forum video and relevant material related to the 2017 edition of the Civil Society Forum South can be accessed via the following link:

<https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-governance-civilsociety/wiki/civil-society-forum-2017>

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The different stakeholders present during the Forum agreed on the need to strengthen the **regional approach** in the southern neighbourhood, while considering **national and local contexts** (ENP differentiated approaches). A **regular and genuine political dialogue between the EU and civil society** remains crucial, as does the **promotion and defense of all human rights and fundamental freedoms**, and the **continuous support of the EU to civil society** in the region. Given the current challenges faced in the southern neighbourhood, there has been a call for increased efforts in these fields. There was particular emphasis on the following recommendations:

On the role of the EU — for civil society, the EU should:

- step up its efforts to support civil society, and **facilitate and encourage tripartite dialogue between the EU, governments and CSOs — including the media and social partners —**; partnerships should also be encouraged at local level.
- continue **promoting an enabling environment** where CSOs — including independent labour organisations and trade unions — can act freely and access resources.
- **consult and involve CSOs and youth in a more proactive and transparent way** in all its cooperation policies, and during all steps of the process. Special care has to be placed on the representativeness of the CSOs involved, including the new players among civil society that have emerged since the Arab Spring. At partner country level, **EU delegations should be given more capacity** to engage with national and even local CSOs.
- continue to help build the **capacity of CSOs**. It remains fundamental for CSOs to fully play their role as genuine actors of change in many domains and therefore this role needs to be boosted. A special focus should be placed on strengthening the institutional capacities of small and medium CSOs to allow them to access EU funds.

- integrate a **human rights-based approach** in all EU operational activities for development, as reiterated in its 'Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015 -2019'.
- develop an **action plan** to incorporate civil society recommendations where in line with the EU mandate.

On the role of CSOs —CSOs were recommended to:

- play a **greater role in policy-making processes at national and EU levels**, and boost their capacities, and better structure and organise themselves in networks to do so. At national level, they should closely monitor EU association agreements.
- **cooperate more with the media**, and develop closer partnerships with local authorities and religious leaders.
- **strengthen their relations with EU delegations**, including both the political and operation sections.
- organise a **regional forum on human rights and vulnerable groups (including LGBT)**, with the support of the EU.

For both the EU and CSOs (common actions):

The need for a **regional hub for structured dialogue by and for civil society** while ensuring coordination with EU institutions was reaffirmed. **A regional platform** will serve civil society from the region to set priorities for contributing to regional policy agendas, boost contributions on priority themes, strengthen partnerships, and facilitate the creation of networks to act at regional level (at policy and operational level).

Further, the following structures would also be necessary: (i) a media observatory (as suggested by the Anna Lindh Foundation), (ii) an observatory on violence against women, (iii) a joint EU/CSOs observatory for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of migration governance.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Final Agenda

Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South 10-12 July, *Brussels*

(Albert Borschette Conference Centre, CCAB, 36 rue Froissart, 1040 Brussels)

10 July

8:30 -10:00	Registration and coffee	
8:30 – 10:00	Restricted: South Advisory Group (SAG) introduction and exchange on the Future of the dialogue (interpretation from 9:00 - 10:00) <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	8:30 – 11:00 Restricted: meeting for organisers of the Forum, facilitators, moderators, IISG and rapporteurs <i>Room 2.A</i>
10.00 – 11.00	‘Sharing experiences of advocacy to the EU’: by EUROMED RIGHTS, and ANND <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	
11.00 – 12:00	- Introduction: short introduction by the organisers - Methodology on the forum: recommendations of past editions, objectives and outputs by EU institutions, the South Advisory Group and thematic facilitators Exchange of views on the objectives of the Forum, and the future of the dialogue EU /SC South Neighbourhood <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	
12.00 – 13.00	Opening - <u>Keynote address by F. Mogherini</u> , High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission - <u>Exchange of view on the key recommendations</u> from Tunis preparatory seminars - questions and answers <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	
13.00 – 14.30	LUNCH	
14.30 — 15.15	EU Policy Framework — EU Global Strategy, the ENP and 2012 EU Christian Danielsson, Director General DG NEAR <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	
15.15 – 16.30	Working with civil society at Regional level and mainstreaming panel with Irene Mingasson (NEAR Head of Unit, regional programmes Neighbourhood South), Rosamaria Gili (EEAS, Head of Division) Exchanges with regional institutions: Union for the Mediterranean, League of Arab States, Anna Lindh Foundation <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	
16.30 – 16.45	Coffee break	
16.45 – 18.15	1) Plenary Dialogue on Strengthening Resilience and building Stability: - <u>Keynote address</u> by Pedro Serrano , EEAS Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and crisis response <u>Presentation of key recommendations</u> on resilience (from the Tunis preparatory seminar and the EPLO meeting) by CSOs from the region and by thematic expert John Bell. <u>Response from EU to the recommendations:</u> Pedro Serrano , EEAS Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response, Michael Miller , DG NEAR B1 Head of Unit (Middle East), <u>Exchange of views</u> Moderation by the thematic facilitator: John Bell <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	



European Union

**Civil Society Forum
Neighbourhood South**

11 July — Thematic approach

9:00 – 10:15	Plenary Dialogue on Migration and Mobility: <u>Presentation of key recommendations</u> of the Tunis preparatory seminar by CSOs from the region <u>Response from EU:</u> Colin Scicluna , Deputy Managing Director, EEAS (European External Action Service) Jean-Christophe Filori , Head of Unit Maghreb, NEAR B3, European Commission <u>Exchange of views</u> Moderation by thematic expert: Hassen Boubakry <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			
10.15– 11:30	Plenary Dialogue on Fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development <u>Presentation of key recommendations</u> of the Tunis preparatory seminar by CSOs from the region <u>Response from EU:</u> Ingrid Schwaiger , Head of Sector Economic Governance, NEAR B2 Jean-Paul Tricart , Head of Unit, DG EMPLOYMENT <u>Exchange of views</u> Moderation by thematic expert: Carine Elya <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			
11.30	<i>coffee Break</i>			
11.45 – 13.00	Plenary Dialogue on Human Rights <u>Presentation of key recommendations</u> of the Tunis preparatory seminar by CSOs from the region <u>Response from EU:</u> Mercedes Garcia Perez , EEAS Head of Division GLOBAL.1 (Human Rights) <u>Exchange of views</u> Moderation by thematic expert: Nabila Hamza <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			
13.00 – 14.30	LUNCH Workshop 1			
14.30 – 16.00	Human Rights: Democratic transition and Governance <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	Reducing inequalities: Employability for Youth: vocational challenges; Young women in the labour force Room 0.B	Resilience: Security Sector Reform Room 0.C	Migration: Legal Migration and Mobility Room 1.A
16.00 – 16.15	<i>coffee break</i> Workshop 2			
16.15 – 18.00	Human Rights: Violence against women and women's rights protection <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	Reducing inequalities: Support to SMEs and innovation Room 0.B	Resilience: Preventing/Countering violent extremism Room 0.C	Migration: Humanitarian and protection imperatives on Migration Room 1.A
18.00 – 18.15 -	<i>Restricted: rapporteurs' Meeting</i> For all: Cocktail and Dinner			



European Union

Civil Society Forum Neighbourhood South

12 July

Workshop 3

9.00 - 10:20	Human Rights: <i>Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and preventing discrimination</i> <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	Reducing inequalities: <i>Social Dialogue and Social Economy</i> <i>Room 0.B</i>	Resilience: <i>Conflict prevention</i> <i>Room 0.C</i>	Migration: <i>Building tools and mechanisms for EU/Civil Society monitoring of international responses</i> <i>Room 1.A</i>
10.20-10.35	Coffee Break			
10.35 – 13.00	Cross Cutting issues — Agents of Change			
	Empowering young voices through education and employment Moderation: Salvatore Nigro (Education for Employment) <i>Plenary 0.D</i>	Unlocking the potential of Women in Societies and for resilience Moderation: Shade Islam (Friends of Europe) <i>Room 0.B</i>	How the Media can work better with Civil Society Moderation: Shahira Amin, journalist <i>Room 0.C</i>	Climate Change and environment; risks and opportunities for Civil Society Moderation: Federica Pesce, NEAR B2 <i>Room 1.A</i>
13.00 – 14.30	LUNCH			
13.40 - 15.00	Restricted: Working sessions on 4 rooms for rapporteurs and facilitators to finalise recommendations and conclusions <i>Plenary 0.D Room 0.B Room 0.C Room 1.A</i>			
14.30 – 15.15	Conclusions and recommendations from the Cross Cutting Issues — Agents of Change Presentations by Rapporteurs of the 4 sessions and debate <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			
15.15 – 16.30	Conclusions and recommendations from the four thematic groups <i>Plenary 0.D</i> Keynote address by M.Popowski , Deputy Director General NEAR Integrating the role of civil society onto EU policy Key conclusions of the 4 thematic groups and dialogue with the EU - Human Rights and governance - Building Resilience and promoting Stability - Employability / Social economy / Reducing Inequalities - Migration and Mobility Closing address and responses to recommendations by Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues at European External Action Service			
16.30 – 16.45	Coffee break			
16.45-17.30	NEXT STEPS of the process , Speaker: Emma Udwin , Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn Chair: Irene Mingasson Other relevant events: EU Africa Summit Policy Forum for Development, Civil Society and the Union for the Mediterranean <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			
17.30 – 19.00	Southern civil society's Meeting and End of the event <i>Plenary 0.D</i>			

Annex 2: Concept note on the thematic group ‘Security and resilience’

Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Stability is the umbrella theme for this 4th edition of the Civil Society Forum for the Neighbourhood South, which has also set **a specific focus on youth**. Fostering state and societal to the East and to the South of the European Union is one of the top five priorities of the [EU Global Strategy](#). The [2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy \(ENP\)](#) reflects the Strategy’s agenda on resilience. Thus taking forward the Global strategy and the Review (see the first [Joint Report on the Implementation of the ENP Review — JOIN\(2017\) 18 final of 18 May 2017](#)) represent a major part of the EU’s work on strengthening resilience in the Southern Neighbourhood.

As laid out in the recently released [Joint Communication on a Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s external action of 7 June](#), strengthening resilience can help secure progress towards national and regional development and security goals in a more complex and contested world. The goal is to move towards a more structural and long-term approach to risks and challenges that can test societies’ response.

By **resilience** we mean to strengthen capacity of states and societies to anticipate and adjust to pressures beyond their immediate control, while maintaining social and political cohesion and without undermining core human rights and democratic principles. When we talk about pressures, we mean both long-term pressures — such as demography, resource scarcity, poor governance, geo-political uncertainties — and shocks or crises such as violent conflict.

Maintaining effective relationships and social trust across society and between citizens and government is a key factor of resilience, and crucial for managing conflict and building peace. The fundamental responsibility and ownership over strengthening resilience lies first and foremost with those states and societies themselves. Civil society is a key source of resilience, and it is essential to protect the civic space that help foster it, to take local agency seriously and to enable conditions that allow NGOs to operate and in an environment that is secure.

In the Arab world, finding the right relationship between a state’s security system and the communities it should be serving has become a central, and even overriding consideration in the legitimacy and effectiveness of the state and the ability to sustain reform programmes. Whether it is the rise of violent extremism in many countries, or the response of state authorities and their treatment of citizens, or civil strife, conflict and war, the lack of security, and excessive actions by security forces have come to define much of the region, with significant consequences for it and surrounding regions, including Europe.

The number of issues related to this problem range from: prevention of violent extremism, security sector reform, greater transparency and oversight mechanisms in the security sector, protection of victims and infusing human rights into legal and institutional processes related to security actions, among others. So far, the **role of civil society**, acting mainly on the subnational level, has taken a far second to that of security forces, their reactions and the consequences thereof.

The contribution that civil society working on the ground can bring in the security sector is sometimes underestimated. This Forum is an opportunity for the civil society to take an active part in the identification and design of adequate solutions. The ability to include an effective role of civil society in the identification and management of the root causes of security challenges, and the reactions to them, may be essential in order to develop state and societal resilience in the longer term. Whether it is in the development of greater community resilience, the inclusion of marginalised communities and gender specificities, or ensuring greater transparency and accountability in the security sector, civil society plays a greater role. Due to their unique access to informal structures they often play an important peacebuilding role within local communities and can at the same time act as intermediaries between the international and local level. Integration of the various sectors of society in plans of action can only make the response more effective. An enhanced dialogue between civil society and the European Union is key to improving the overall response to these issues. This meeting is the beginning of such a dialogue.

Building on resilience approach set out in the Joint Communication, and the dialogues and main recommendations on Preventing Violent Extremism/Countering Violent extremism (PVE/CVE) and security sector reform (SSR) which emerged from the Regional Civil Society Preparatory Seminars which took place in Tunis on 25-27 April 2017, as well as on the recommendations from civil society on their role in conflict prevention from a meeting organised by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) on 31 January 2017, the Thematic Group on Security and Resilience, will look at the role civil society organisations play working on the ground in anticipating risk, identifying strengths and vulnerabilities, and contributing to adaptive strategies aimed at contributing to sustainable stability in the countries, through the prism of SSR, PVE/CVE and conflict prevention. The objective is to have a genuine dialogue on related topics, between representatives from the EU institutions and civil society from the Southern Neighbourhood countries (Northern Africa and Middle East).

The thematic workshop will combine a plenary dialogue session followed by three sub-themes working groups, in order to create a more participative and inclusive environment for discussions and to come up with relevant and concrete recommendations for an enhanced partnership between CSOs and the EU.

A Plenary Dialogue on Security and Resilience (90 min): Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Stability

This plenary session will allow space for dialogue between Civil Society representatives and political leadership, senior management and practitioners from the EU. It will address the EU policies and cooperation in **Strengthening Resilience and Promoting Stability** with national institutions and mechanisms, including the security sector, as well as civil society.

1. **Facilitator (John Bell)** introduces speakers and presents the methodology of the session
2. **Keynote address** by **Pedro Serrano**, EEAS Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and crisis response
3. **Presentation of key recommendations on three priorities (SSR, PVE/CVE and conflict prevention)** by **CSOs from the region: Samia Zayani** (Tunisia), member of the South Advisory Group (SAG) and member of Water Dynamic and CAFA to present on SSR and CVE/PVE and **John Bell** will present on conflict prevention on behalf of EPLO.

4. Response from EU interlocutors to the recommendations:

- **Pedro Serrano**, Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response at the European External Action Service (EEAS)
- **Michael Miller**, DG NEAR B1 Head of Unit (Middle East)

5. Exchange of views

Moderation: John Bell

Rapporteurs: **Anas Talalqa** (Jordan), researcher and journalist, and lead delegate at Generations For Peace and **Othmane Aissam Benaissa** (Algeria), activist and founder of young Arab voices in Algeria.

3 sub-themes working groups: (90 min each)

Based on Tunis Civil Society recommendations, three priority topics and sessions were identified to open the dialogue:

Workshop 1: Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the space for Civil Society to operate in SSR

The workshop will focus on getting greater understanding by CSOs of the security dimension in ENP, and of their role in SSR

Priority recommendation(s) from the preparatory seminar in Tunis: 1) CS and the State need to work in closer partnership. The EU can assist in removing blockages for CS operations and in building capacities further 2) Need to reinforce EU code of conduct on arms export, and other policies, in order to create a better context to pursue P/CVE, and for CSOs to operate overall.

Objectives of the workshop:

- 1) **Improve EU/CSO Linkages:** Understand better ENP policy, and EU instruments that CSOs can connect to and work with regarding SSR. Greater discussion on improving mechanisms of accountability of States in the region. (20 min debate)
- 2) **Understanding Role and Improving Capacities of CSOs:** What is CSOs role regarding SSR? Watchdog? Partner? Observer? Moderator? What works best? How can CSO capacities be raised in order to deal effectively with State/security forces and institutions? (20 min debate)
- 3) **Build Greater trust between CSOs and State regarding SSR:** SSR issue in region is quite new, and therefore governments of the region are not receptive to in-depth reform. What is the best way to deal with this perception when dealing with SSR and policing, including at community level? Discuss ways to build trust and consensus with CSOs and thereby reinforce capacities of security sectors. (20 min debate)

Civil Society speaker: **Fadi Al Qadi**, Human Rights, Civil Society, Advocacy and Media Expert, Jordan

Moderator/facilitator: John Bell, thematic expert.

Rapporteurs: **Anas Talalqa** (Jordan), researcher and journalist, and lead delegate at Generations For Peace and **Othmane Aissam Benaissa** (Algeria), activist and founder of young Arab voices in Algeria.

EU speaker:

Institution	Name	Function
Short introduction (5-10 min)		
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations — NEAR	Anna Reece	Policy Officer and Member of the (CoTE) Centre for thematic expertise on Security (Unit NEAR.B2 Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South)
Contributors:		
Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI)	Sébastien Babaud	Programme Manager IcSP (The EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace)
Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI)	Giovanni Squadrito	Team Leader IcSP (The EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace)

Workshop 2: The role of Civil Society in PVE/CVE.

The workshop will explore the most effective role of CSOs in the conceptualisation and implementation of P/CVE policies, including in addressing the human rights dimension.

Priority recommendation(s) from the preparatory seminar in Tunis: 1) The need for an effective national/regional methodological research framework to better understand root causes of violent extremism, as well as improved networks of action between CS and the State regarding P/CVE policies, including augmented partnership on national plans of action. 2) Need for long-term, context-specific P/CVE actions/programming with a 'do no harm approach'.

Objectives of the Workshop:

1) Greater understanding of working with youth: In order to develop resilience, a focus on youth and PVE/CVE remains essential. How is this best done through education, developing 'societal values', including through all forms of media? Will the creation of a platform for positive narratives and success stories, to learn from difficult cases, increase connectivity between CSOs, understand better the impact of initiatives, and develop dialogue between EU and the Southern Neighbourhood help?

2) Deepen understanding of role of gender: How can gender issues be integrated into PVE/CVE and how can they have the most effect in increasing community resilience? This will include and examination of the linkage between PVE and preventing violence against women (VAW).

3) Develop Mechanisms for Moving Forward: What are the ways to foster best practice exchange? Can there be more cooperation between North and South CSOs? How can the process of developing a national methodological research framework begin?

Civil Society speaker: Rebecca Crozier, International Alert.

Moderator/facilitator: John Bell, thematic expert.

Rapporteurs: **Anas Talalqa** (Jordan), researcher and journalist, and lead delegate at Generations For Peace and **Othmane Aissam Benaissa** (Algeria), activist and founder of young Arab voices in Algeria.

EU speakers — short introduction (5-10 min), and contributors:

Institution	Name	Function
Short introduction (5-10 min)		
DG International Cooperation and Development — DEVCO	Maria Castaldi	Programme Manager-Countering Violent Extremism (Unit DEVCO B5 Security, Nuclear Safety)
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Marcos Granados Gomez	Desk officer (EEAS/SECPOL.2 Counter-Terrorism)
Contributors:		
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Diego Marani	Cultural policy coordinator (EEAS/GLOBAL.2)
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Joel Schuyer	Policy officer (EEAS/SECPOL.2 Counter-Terrorism)
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations — NEAR	Sophie Dagand	Centre of Thematic Expertise (CoTE) on Crisis Reaction and Security Sector Reform (Unit NEAR.B2 Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South)
DG Education and Culture — EAC	Walter Zampieri	Head of Unit D1 (Cultural Policy)
DG Education and Culture — EAC	Carmela Cutugno	Unit EAC D1 (Cultural Policy)
DG Education and Culture — EAC	tbc	Unit working on education/Erasmus

Workshop 3: Partnering with Civil Society in conflict prevention:

This workshop will explore the nexus between EU conflict analysis/conflict prevention programming and CSOs' actions and input.

Priority recommendation(s) from the EPLO Meeting of January 2017: 1) Need to define ownership in conflict prevention between the EU and its partner countries in relation to resilience, sustainability, and political processes and contexts and have it integrated in conflict prevention programming 2) Importance for the EU to connect with various CSOs, in particular with youth and women's groups, in devising conflict-sensitive programming.

Objectives of the workshop:

1) Discuss how to improve the role of CSOs in EU conflict analysis: CSOs to develop a better understanding of joint analyses conducted internally within the EU institutions. What are the ways for the EU to further engage with CSOs to gain insights from conflict-affected contexts, and capitalise on lessons learned from CSO projects to do programming in a more conflict-sensitive

manner? CSOs can be seen as partners in these processes, given their context-specific experience and locally-embedded access to informal channels and networks.

2) Understand better the role CSOs can play in developing improved early warning: The CSOs role can be both in the conflict analysis dimension (as above) as well as on the ground through their activities and knowledge of context and communities. How can this best be done effectively and more regularly? Is a framework of work required? What are the keys to developing early warning systems?

3) Improved connections between EU and CSOs in developing conflict-sensitive programming: How can CSOs input feed more effectively into EU programming? CSOs, in particular with youth and women's groups, can help identify key champions within local, national and regional governments who can support political dialogue. Some participants stressed the importance of making multi-year funding available for CSOs working on conflict resolution and prevention related issues.

Civil Society speakers: Sonya Reines-Djivanides, Executive Director of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and Samia Zayani (Tunisia), member of the South Advisory Group (SAG) and member of Water Dynamic and CAFA.

Moderators/facilitators: John Bell, thematic expert.

Rapporteurs: **Anas Talalqa** (Jordan), researcher and journalist, and lead delegate at Generations For Peace and **Othmane Aissam Benaissa** (Algeria), activist and founder of young Arab voices in Algeria.

EU speakers — short introduction, and contributors:

Institution	Name	Function
Short introduction (5-10 min)		
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Tim Heath	Peace & Conflict Adviser (EEAS/PRISM Prevention of Conflict, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation)
European External Action Service (EEAS)	Bianca Suessenbach	Adviser (EEAS.SG.2 Division: Strategic Planning)
Contributors		
DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations — NEAR	Stéphane Halgand	Coordinator of the Centre of Thematic Expertise (CoTE) on Crisis Reaction and Security Sector Reform (Unit NEAR.B2 Regional Programmes Neighbourhood South)
Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI)	Sébastien Babaud	Programme Manager IcSP (The EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace)
DG International Cooperation and Development — DEVCO	Elisabeth Pape	Deputy Head of Unit DEVCO.B2 (Resilience, fragility)

Annex 3: Concept note on the thematic group ‘Migrations’

The European Union has reiterated, in a number of resolutions, its commitment to address migration issues. In 2015, the EU reviewed the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) taking into account the evolving fluid situation around the EU’s Neighbourhood. The revision encapsulated the new political impetus for deeper cooperation on migration as already reflected in the European Agenda on Migration and the Valletta Summit on Migration. This new approach was underpinned by the desire to promote a balanced and comprehensive approach to migration paying attention to all the pillars of migration policy and harvesting the benefits of well-managed migration and mobility. Of relevance for the Neighbourhood South region is the Joint Communication *Lives in Dignity* which narrows the link between forced displacement and development aiming to prevent forced displacement from becoming protracted and to gradually end dependence on humanitarian assistance by fostering resilience and self-reliance and enabling the displaced and host communities to live in dignity.

In the region, the EU has translated this policy framework into innovative, flexible and tailored instruments anchored to the local reality building upon partnerships with partner countries, Civil Society and Local Authorities. Two Trust Funds — the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis (the ‘MADAD’ Trust Fund) and the EU Trust Fund for Africa — were created reflecting this overarching policy framework. Five countries of the ENI South region benefit in particular from the North of Africa window of the latter.

The ‘**Madad’ Fund**, was set up in December 2014 to enable a coherent and integrated EU aid response to the Syrian crisis with two overarching priorities: 1) the creation of job opportunities for both refugees and their own host countries’ populations and 2) the promotion of access to quality education to all Syrian and host countries’ children, ensuring there is no lost generation. To date, EUR 1 billion have been committed to increase the resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities.

The Valletta Declaration and its Action plan set the ground for the creation of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The programmes adopted under its North of Africa window have addressed the pillars of the Valletta Action Plan by, first and foremost, supporting the protection needs of both migrants and refugees, migration governance, facilitating return and sustainable reintegration and addressing the drivers of irregular migration. To date, EUR 222.5 million have been committed to programmes that address the multiple challenges in the region.

Building on the dialogues and main recommendations which emerged from the Regional Civil Society Preparatory Seminars which took place in Tunis on 25-27 April 2017, the Thematic Group on Migration, will look at the ways and means for CSOs to engage with EU in addressing migration issues at regional and national levels. The objective is to have a genuine policy dialogue on related topics, between representatives from the EU institutions and civil society from the Southern Neighbourhood countries (Northern Africa and Middle East).

The thematic workshop will combine a plenary dialogue session followed by three sub-themes working groups, in order to create a more participative and inclusive environment for discussions

and to come up with relevant and concrete recommendations for an enhanced partnership between CSOs and the EU.

A Plenary Dialogue on Migration (11 July, 9:00 to 10:15)

This plenary session will allow space for dialogue between Civil Society representatives and political leadership, senior management and practitioners from the EU. It will address the EU policies and cooperation addressing migration and forced displacement issues.

<u>EU representative:</u>	Colin Scicluna, Director, MENA Region, EEAS Jean-Christophe Filori, Head of Unit Maghreb and Center of Expertise on Migration, DG NEAR
<u>Civil Society:</u>	Linda Alkalash, Tamkeen Fields for Aid, Jordan.
<u>Moderation:</u>	Marie Martin, EuroMed Rights & Hassan BOUBAKRI (Facilitator & CSO South)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Marco di Dinato. UNIMED (Mediterranean Universities Union)/ Italy

3 sub-themes working groups: (about 90 min each)

Based on the Tunis Civil Society recommendations, three priority topics and sessions were identified to open the dialogue:

Session 1: Legal Migration and Mobility (11 July, 14:30-16:00)

Objectives:

- (1) To discuss barriers preventing mobility of third countries citizens to the European territory;*
- (2) To identify initiatives and programmes implemented by the EU and its Member States in order to mitigate the effects of these barriers or even to remove them gradually.*

<u>Civil Society:</u>	Hassen Boubakri, Facilitator & CSO South
<u>EU representatives:</u>	Myriam WATSON & Monica ALFARO-MURCIA, Unit International Cooperation, DG HOME
<u>Moderation:</u>	Aymen Zohry / Egyptian Society for Migration Studies (EGYMIG)
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Salima M. Alfakhri/ Director Women & Youth Empowerment Forum

Session 2: Forced Displacement, including aspects of protection, resilience, human trafficking, discrimination, humanitarian assistance (11 July, 16:15-18:00)

Objectives:

(1) To discuss examples from the field where refugees and migrants are facing risks;

2) To identify adequate responses addressing human trafficking, discrimination, humanitarian assistance, protection, and resilience.

Civil Society: *Maria Jammal, Humanity Crew, Israël*

EU representative: *Iris Abraham, EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, DG NEAR*
Dina Sinigallia, Unit Policy Development and Regional Strategy, DG ECHO

Moderation: *Malek Kefif, FTDES, Tunisia*

Rapporteur: *Najla Chahda Thabet, Consultant on Migration and Human Trafficking*

Session 3) Political and Institutional Responses to the Crisis: civil society monitoring of international responses (12 July, 9:00-10:20)

Objectives:

1) Identify the framework of existing EU actions and initiatives;

2) Identify mechanisms that enable Civil Society Organisations to be fully implicated in initiatives and programmes aimed at the implementation of the recommendations.

Civil Society: *Ahmad Mroueh OXFAM (UK/ Lebanon). TBC*

EU representatives: *Camilla Hagstrom, Deputy Head of Unit Migration and Employment, DG DEVCO*
Corinne André, Center of Expertise on Migration/ Trust Fund Manager, EUTF Africa — North of Africa window, DG NEAR

Moderation: *Rachid Badouli, Fondation Orient Occident, Morocco*

Rapporteur: *Manal BENANI / Young Mediterranean voices)*

Reminder: Civil society recommendations on Migration issued during Tunis preparatory seminar (April 2017)

Session 1: Enhancing mobility and circulation

Recommendation: Adopt mobility policy based on human rights and in compliance with international conventions

Tool: Establish a mixed mechanism involving EU institutions/CSOs to ensure the implementation of the follow up regarding international conventions, and the mobility of workers.

Session 2: Political and institutional responses to the crisis

Recommendation: Develop a joint evaluation (CSOs/EU institutions) of the various mechanisms and programmes adopted at the EU /African Union, EU/Turkey summits in migration governance in the Mediterranean region via the creation of an observatory.

Tool: A partnership between CSOs and EU institutions in developing this study, and a report that will be discussed during the next summits in order to have an inclusive visibility.

Session 3: The legal and humanitarian dimension

Recommendation: Mobilise all necessary means in order to build the institutional capacities of CSOs, and allow them to implement programmes aiming at a better protection of immigrants and refugees, and a more efficient coordination of support and assistance programmes.

Tool: Set up an appropriate financial and technical mechanism, specific to civil society, beyond regular international mechanisms.

Session 4: Preventing and fighting all forms of abuses and violence against migrants

Recommendation: Encourage alliances, partnerships and networking between the different CSOs of countries of origin, transit and reception, in order to build their capacities, and allow them to fulfill their missions regarding the protection of migrants against risks (violence of their rights, marginalisation and discrimination) and sensitise local communities to initiate a stronger sense of solidarity with the migrants and the refugees.

Tool: Develop a governance strategy based on rights and adopt an integrated programme to support and assist migrants and refugees as well as create coalitions based on task forces 'experts from north and south' in the light of all of the studies conducted.

Annex 4: Concept note on the thematic group ‘Governance and Human Rights’

The European Union has reiterated, in a number of resolutions, its commitment to encourage and assist democratisation processes and its engagement with civil society as a guarantee for more inclusive and stable societies. Both, the EU Agenda for Change, adopted in 2011 and the European Neighborhood Policy, reviewed in 2015, recognise that human rights, democracy and other key elements of good governance, are vital for inclusive and sustainable development, and shall feature more prominently in all its partnerships. They renew EU support to civil society as a crucial component of any democratic system, engaging in initiatives to foster pluralism and further participatory democracy and governance.

Building on the dialogues and main recommendations which emerged from the Regional Civil Society Preparatory Seminars which took place in Tunis on 25-27 April 2017, the Thematic Group on Human Rights and Governance, will look at the ways and means for CSOs to engage with EU in securing meaningful democracy and governance improvements at national and regional levels. The objective is to have a genuine policy dialogue on related topics, between representatives from the EU institutions and civil society from the Southern Neighbourhood countries (Northern Africa and Middle East).

The thematic workshop will combine a plenary dialogue session followed by three sub-themes working groups, in order to create a more participative and inclusive environment for discussions and to come up with relevant and concrete recommendations for an enhanced partnership between CSOs and the EU.

A Plenary Dialogue on Human Rights and Governance (75 min)

This plenary session will allow space for dialogue between Civil Society representatives and political leadership, senior management and practitioners from the EU. It will address the EU policies and cooperation in promoting democracy and human rights with national institutions and mechanisms, including human rights institutions, as well as civil society.

3 sub-themes working groups: (about 90 min each)

Based on Tunis Civil Society recommendations, three priority topics and sessions were identified to open the dialogue:

Session 1: Enhancing Democratic Transition and Governance: Tools and mechanism to ensure CSOs and national human rights defenders involvement in the implementation and periodic monitoring and evaluation of EU policies in the area of democracy and governance.

This session will look at democratisation processes across the MENA countries with a special focus on governance, anti-corruption, democratic transition and elections. It will be particularly devoted to explain the EU framework and priorities for cooperation in the area of governance and democracy consolidation processes.

It will also discuss the possibility of a formal mechanism/structure for CSOs to engage with EU in securing meaningful democracy and governance improvements at national and regional levels and to ensure periodic monitoring of the progress made.

EU speakers: Toby Sexton (EEAS) to present ENP/political framework,
Alexandre Baron (DG NEAR, Human Rights) to present EU financial assistance in the area of governance.

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Carolina Lasso-Navarro	CoTE RoL/FR
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Francesca Gilli or Helena Valdenasi	Tunisia Desk
	Massimiliano Messi	Jordan Desk
	Angelo Borgogni	Palestine Desk
DG DEVCO	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Thomas Millar	B1, HoS Democracy
EEAS	Sylwia Domisiewicz	Global 3, Democracy Support/Elections
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR

Session 2: Violence against women and women's rights protection: Why should civil society advocate for the signing of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence?

Combating violence against women is one of the European Commission's priorities for 2017. This is why the Commission just signed the [Istanbul Convention](#) and has launched a year-long campaign to raise awareness of all forms of violence towards women, which is using the hashtag [#SayNoStopVAW](#) on social media.

This session will be devoted to explore actions needed to end gender-based violence and protect women victims of violence. Specific attention will be given to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, which provides the most progressive and comprehensive international standard on combating violence against women and girls. The Convention recognises that violence against women constitutes a violation of their human rights. It also addresses violence against women through measures aimed at preventing violence, protecting and supporting its victims, and prosecuting the perpetrators. The role of civil society in advocating for the convention and encouraging their governments to ratify and implement it will be also addressed.

EU speakers: Ms Ilaria Brazzoduro (DG Justice, Gender Equality) to speak about the Istanbul Convention

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Irene Mingasson	B2 HoU
	Myriam Ibañez Mendizabal	B2, Gender, Neighbourhood South
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Katja de Sadeleer	Egypt Desk (VAW specific projects/CfP)

	Jean-Marie Moreau	Morocco Desk (budget support with gender/VAW component)
	Iba Abdo	Syria Desk
DG DEVCO	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Marina Marchetti	B1, Gender
EEAS	Luigia di Gisi	Global 1, Gender focal point
	Helen Gonnord	Global 1, Gender focal point
	Anu Pulkinnen	MENA focal point
	Adeline Torcol	MENA focal point
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR
DG JUST	Gianina Popescu	Unit 02 — International coordination
	Ilaria Brazzoduro	Unit D2 — Gender Equality
	Emilie Jarrett	Unit D2 — Gender equality

Session 3: Protecting the rights of vulnerable groups and preventing discrimination: What strategies can civil society and the EU pursue to prevent discrimination of minorities and LGBTI in particular?

As part of its efforts to abolish any kind of discrimination against individuals, the EU works to uphold the human rights of LGBTI persons — who should be able to live free from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. In June 2013, the EU adopted [guidelines for supporting LGBTI persons' human rights](#), to be used by EU staff around the world in connection with human rights country strategies and civil society organisations.

This session will be devoted to the EU's diplomatic efforts to eliminating discriminatory laws and policies against LGBTI persons and supporting and protecting human rights defenders. Different strategies and modes of actions of civil society organisations and human rights activists to assess LGBTI human rights issues, protect vulnerable groups and fight various forms of discrimination will be analysed, together with the international and regional instruments that are relevant for the rights of minority groups.

Invited EU representatives:

Institution	Name	Function
DG NEAR	Alexandre Baron	CoTE RoL/FR
	Carolina Lasso-Navarro	CoTE RoL/FR
	Gaby Hagmüller	CoTE Civil Society
	Francesca Gilli or	Tunisia Desk
	Helena Valdenasi	
	Fabienne Bessonne	Lebanon Desk
	Katja de Sadeleer	Egypt Desk
	Jean-Marie Moreau	Morocco Desk
DG DEVCO	Leslie Pierrard	B1, Neighbourhood South
	Maxence Daublain	B1, Programme Manager
EEAS	Victoria Correa	Global 1, LGBTI
	Tove Gant	Global 1, Anti-Discrimination
EEAS/EUSR Human Rights	Mychelle Rieu	Advisor to the EUSR
	Caroline Stein	Advisor to the EUSR

Annex 5: Background note on the Cross-Cutting session on: *Empowering Young Voices through Education and Employment*

Youth unemployment is a matter of major concern worldwide, but is particularly salient in the MENA region. At 29.7 %, youth unemployment in the region is among the highest in the world, more than double the global average of 13.6 %. Young female unemployment is particularly striking at 45.6 %. Plus, two out of three working-age youths do not participate in the labour market and, in some countries, one in four are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), contributing to high levels of poverty and lost opportunities for growth, and representing one of the most serious social problems in the region. The population in the MENA is also one of the youngest in the world, with nearly one in five people between 15-24 years old and 50 % of the population under 25 years of age, requiring significant investments in education, health, employment, housing, and infrastructure.

As more and more youth reach the working-age, it is estimated that in the MENA region alone, 5 million new jobs need to be created per year to accommodate the old and new labour force. That said, employers continue to report difficulties to hire work-ready employees for jobs that are already available, citing, among others, inappropriate education, and inadequate technical, 'soft' or life skills as barriers to hiring.

The MENA has a wealth of human resources that could spearhead economic growth, but which remains mostly unutilised. As the MENA has become more connected to the global economy, the region's educational systems have not managed to provide youth with the necessary skills demanded by businesses, resulting in a serious skills mismatch between what employers want and what jobseekers can offer. Given these mismatches, unemployment levels tend to increase as educational attainment increases.

This situation is aggravated by the massive influx of refugees in recent years. The Syrian conflict, in particular, but also the intensification of several other conflicts in the MENA, as well as in neighbouring areas such as Afghanistan, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and northern Nigeria, have led millions to flee their homes, many to fragile or economically weak MENA countries or to use these as gateways to Europe, putting further pressure on the region's already strained economies. UNHCR figures indicate that 39 % of the world's displaced are being hosted in the MENA region.

But not all who leave their homes are escaping conflict. Many young men and women decide to migrate to seek better job and living opportunities elsewhere. A 2016 survey of 10 000 young people in the MENA as part of the European Commission-funded SAHWA project, of which EuropeFE was a key partner, revealed that 86 % of youth would emigrate due to a lack of professional opportunities, low income earning potential, and poor living conditions. In relation to choosing where to emigrate to, most respondents cited rich job opportunities in the host country as the main decision driver.

This predicament has led to a huge loss of productive capacity and increased dependency on older generations, which, in combination with other factors, can lead to frustration, potential social unrest, violence or a motive to emigrate.

While several measures at national and international level are underway to try to address the problem, they are not having the necessary impact, whether because they are not sufficiently adequate or because they are not sufficiently far-reaching. Beyond economic, political and social reforms, deep changes and serious investment in more tailored training and education are needed to match the MENA youth labour supply with the demand from companies for qualified candidates. This can only be achieved through enhanced, sustained coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders.

In this context, there is a valuable opportunity for civil society to play a critical role in providing job training that meets market needs and can be linked to job placement opportunities.

The proposed roundtable, with around 40 representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector, and relevant European institutions, as well as youth, will aim at answering the following questions:

1. What are the major barriers for youth to access available jobs?

Education in the MENA not only does not guarantee employment, but in many countries could be increasing the chances of being unemployed. In some places, unemployment among female diploma-holders surpasses 90 %. While companies are reportedly struggling to find skilled workers to fill vacancies, students themselves also find that their education is not in line with market needs. How can we solve this major skills gap?

2. What are the major barriers faced by employers to hire qualified candidates?

As the MENA becomes more involved in the global economy, new skills are demanded, but regional educational systems are failing to prepare students to successfully find and maintain a decent job. Employability remains a challenge. Companies are reportedly struggling to find skilled workers to fill vacancies. Recent surveys reveal that nearly 90 % of Arab CEOs believe that the limited supply of candidates with the right skills is one of the biggest

challenges for businesses in the region today. What are the most demanded skills? What can be done to match the MENA's vast labour supply with labour demand?

3. How to scale up successful programs and initiatives?

Applying all this at the scale necessary to impact positively on the region's youth employment perspectives is a very costly endeavour. To massively scale up these efforts, what role can technology play? The rapid development of e-learning and blended learning approaches and platforms, 'serious games' and other kinds of simulations can help by offering tailored, practical experience to large numbers at comparatively low costs. How can we leverage the different possibilities to maximise impact?

4. How can civil society promote systems' change?

Tackling youth unemployment in the MENA can only be achieved through enhanced, sustained coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders. Change must start early if it is to have a real impact. On the one side, it is necessary to engage the different governmental and educational institutions, as well as the private sector to change practises and curricula as early as high school, the design of higher education courses, and vocational education and training. On the other side, it is also necessary to engage all stakeholders to improve career development and in creating better pathways to jobs for young women.