



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



The Project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020
Programme for Research and Innovation under grant agreement n 693055

MEDRESET

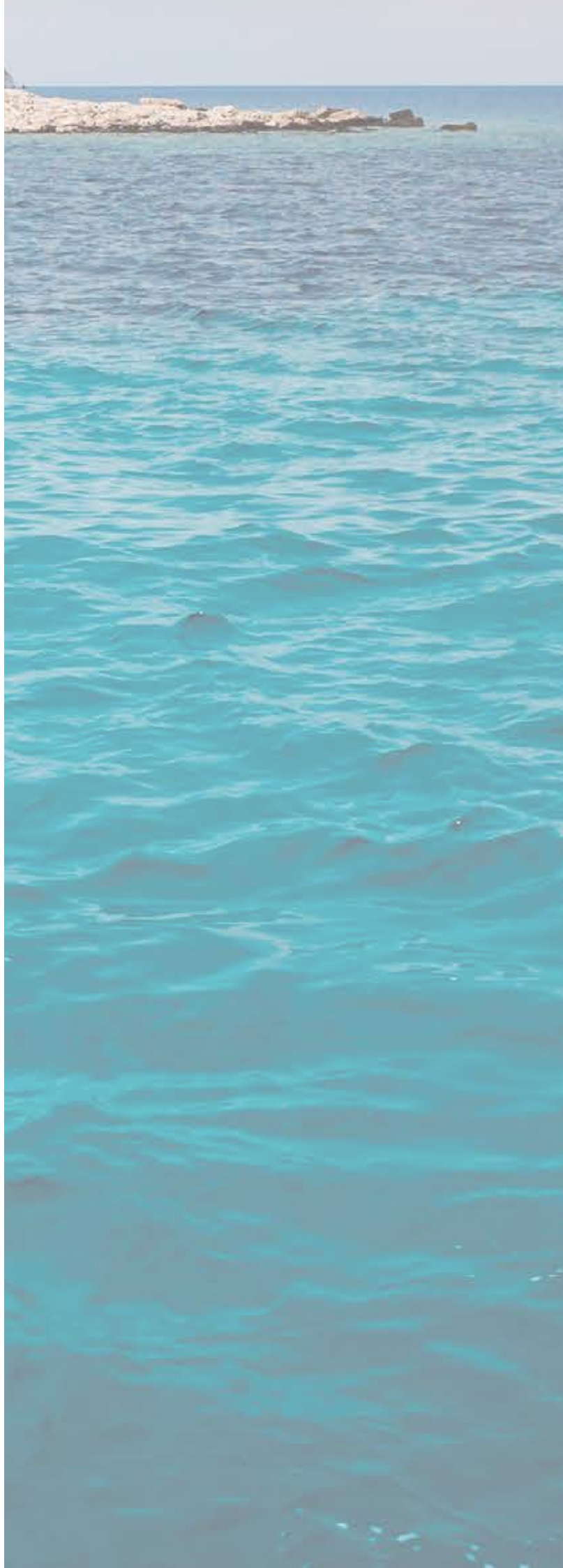
Policy Recommendations

MEDRESET is a consortium of research and academic institutions focusing on different disciplines from the Mediterranean region to develop alternative visions for a new Mediterranean partnership and corresponding EU policies. It aims at designing an inclusive, flexible, and responsive future role for the EU in the region based on the multiple perspectives of local and bottom-up actors.

Published in January 2019.



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9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ON DEMOCRACY SOCIAL JUSTICE & HHRR

As the Mediterranean is increasingly perceived as a space of disparity, division, and separation, the EU should press the reset button in Euro-Mediterranean relations by putting local democracy, human rights and social justice upfront, rather than security and stability. At the same time, what was rejected by the stakeholders is a “civilizing” rhetoric which presents democracy and human rights as European and the EU as an exporter of them, so denying local actors their agency.

1 A wider and more effective agenda

By ignoring regression in human rights the EU will continue to reinforce authoritarianism. Thus, the EU should expand its human rights agenda and actually implement it, including also issues such as social justice.

2 An agenda that is more sensitive to local needs

While expanding and implementing a human rights agenda, the EU should not impose a political or economic model on states such as Tunisia, but rather acknowledge the agency of local actors in devising this by themselves.

3 Labour rights should be crucial

A human-rights-based approach should also inform Mediterranean economic relations, including the respect of labour rights as a major priority and devoting more attention to the gender and social impact of trade agreements.

4 Work with a wider range of stakeholders

The EU should focus more on working with grassroots actors and civil society organizations and less with governments. It is crucial that the EU supports the actions of not co-opted and corrupt civil society organizations in the field of culture, education and socio-economic rights.

5 Engage in a more egalitarian dialogue

The EU should create an equal dialogue with southern grassroots actors, instead of a top-down dialogue. Interlocutors stated that funds coming from the EU should be based on grassroots actors' decisions to create particular projects and programmes, and not based on focus areas decided upon in/by the EU.

6 More sustainable and long-living partnerships

Civil society actors need to be included in the whole decision-making process in the EU. Instead of inviting in and working with external experts, consultants and CSOs, the EU should mainly work with local actors in this respect.

7 Simplify the procedures and make them more agile

Furthermore, the EU should make access to information easier, institutional mechanisms less complicated and access to funds more diverse in order to meet local demands.

8 Gender as a policy driver of decision-making

The violation of women's rights needs to be addressed as part of the broader violation of human rights across all shores of the Mediterranean, that is the denial of refugee rights in Europe, of socio-economic rights of women exploited in labour markets, or of women living under occupation.

9 EU can make a difference in redressing the profound inequalities

To start rethinking Euro-Mediterranean relations from the perspective of redressing the profound inequalities between the two shores of the Mediterranean, what is expected from the EU is a multidimensional project that puts human rights and social justice upfront, rather than security and stability.

9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the largest water consumer in the MENA, a region whose water resources are stretched by environmental impacts, climate change and population growth. Agricultural policies are crucial for sustainability. They should occupy a key spot in the EU's foreign policy and development agenda in the region.

1 More bottom-up approaches in EU's projects and their bilateral design in collaboration with local stakeholders

This includes (i) better inclusion of direct beneficiaries and stakeholders, (ii) accumulation of contextual knowledge and (iii) thorough assessment of local needs. Most of the shortcomings of the EU's projects can be attributed to their non-participatory approaches.

2 Climate change, land ownership inequality, bad working conditions for workers and unsustainable agricultural models as priority concerns

They are often underappreciated in programs that focus on productivity and export of value added crops. Food accessibility rather than food availability remains a major issue of food security in the MENA.

3 Support small farmers who suffer from a lack of competitiveness

Include support in the later stages of the production chain, such as marketing, branding, packaging and transportation. Support the provision of training on fertilizer and integrated pest management, organic agriculture and other sustainable farming practices in order to assure compliance with EU standards.

4 Directly allocate a quota of operational work and funds to women's cooperatives and associations

Oversee the implementation and evaluation reporting of EU projects that promote gender equality to ensure the effectiveness of these projects.

5 Avoid multiplicity of programmes and duplications

Increase use of already available research and improve stakeholder consultations in newly conducted research. The EU should shift away from providing direct technical and financial support to Ministries of Agriculture in target countries. Instead, more assistance should end up with local, tailored projects that are implemented by civil society and private actors.

6 Highlight the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD)

ENPARD should remain at the forefront of all ventures of cooperation and should be the main source of setting the policy framework and strategy for cooperation between actors in the agriculture and water sectors. It has proven to be the most effective tool for this purpose.

7 Make European producer associations aware of the EU development agenda in the neighborhood

European stakeholders (e.g. EU producer associations) should know about local EU programs such as ENPARD and be included in outreach activities in order to help MENA producers to comply with EU food safety and environmental regulations.

8 The EU must be sensitive to the fragile nature of political stability in MENA countries

In its policy interventions, the EU should carefully assess the political environment so as not to appear to favor specific political parties, ethnicities or regions.

9 Support water management strategies and irrigation infrastructures that do not threaten already fragile ecosystems

This can include expansion of drip irrigation systems in arid areas, provided the productivity gains are not used for production expansion, which could lead to increased water consumption.

9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON MIGRATIONS

Migration, asylum and mobility represent an increasingly contentious field of governance in Mediterranean. Cooperation has long been characterized by fundamental divergences of interests, not only between the northern and southern shores, or between sending, transit and receiving countries, but also among institutional and civil society actors on both sides. The following recommendations are made on the basis of stakeholders' evaluation of the EU's implemented policies and approach to migration cooperation.

1 Establish a more balanced partnership-based cooperation

All SEM stakeholders described relations with the EU as unequal and unbalanced and claimed the need for a less Eurocentric and more balanced approach to cooperation in the field of migration.

2 Adopt more comprehensive and cross-cutting policy instruments

EU policy instruments are informed by a compartmentalized approach, but migration cuts across different policy areas and involves political, security and socio-economic issues. EU cooperation with SEM countries should be based on truly integrated and comprehensive policy instruments, allowing for greater coordination among policy fields.

3 Facilitate mobility and improve the governance of labour migration

The EU and European countries should broaden and diversify authorized ways of migration and mobility, so as to cover international protection, labour migration for high- and low-skilled workers, and migration with other motivations. Stakeholders stressed particularly the need to improve the governance of labour migration.

4 Enhance resettlement and improve the governance of asylum seekers' reception

The EU needs to rethink and invest in fairer responsibility-sharing mechanisms for the provision of international protection. The engagement of European countries cannot be limited to financial transfers to hosting countries like Turkey and Lebanon, but should include permanent large-scale resettlement mechanisms.

5 Support reforms of national legal, policy and institutional framework on migration and asylum in SEM countries

SEM civil society stakeholders encouraged the EU to pressure their national authorities to improve the governance of migration and asylum and support reforms in the respective countries, while protecting the fundamental rights of migrants and refugees.

6 Re-prioritize human rights and regain credibility in the eyes of civil society actors

The EU's lowering of its own human rights standards and those that it expects from SEM countries has negative implications for the development of rights-based migration policies in SEM countries and weakens the ability of SEM civil society actors to pressure their governments.

7 Improve effectiveness and sustainability of EU-funded projects

EU-funded projects should focus on the needs identified by local actors through a bottom-up process and should target the broader local community. In order to avoid project overlapping and unequal distribution of funds, the EU should improve coordination with other donors and project implementing actors.

8 Mainstream gender sensitivity and implement gender-specific policies

According to European civil society actors, the EU should have an overall structural gender policy addressing different aspects of female migration in a comprehensive long-term strategic perspective. EU policies should avoid the victimization of female migrants and contribute to a recognition of their agency.

9 Enhance active involvement of local civil society actors and promote forms of participatory governance

SEM stakeholders advocated for a more participatory governance of migration, which actively involves civil society and social partners on both shores of the Mediterranean, including also genuinely local grassroots organizations that are usually left out of the decision-making and cooperation dynamics.

9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON INDUSTRY & ENERGY

Despite several interventions, EU policies related to the industry and energy sector in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia did not really respond to people's welfare and to local economic needs. Indeed, they are still facing several impediments that hinder their performance. A different approach is a must in order to have more effective policies.

1 More inclusive interventions

The EU should be more committed in this regard by undertaking systematic investigations and consultations about the social impact of trade and energy policies with different stakeholders (especially civil society & local communities, which is usually absent compared to state organizations, ministries and think-tanks). The EU should therefore help to build a global vision into which actors could insert their strategy.

2 Engendering industry and energy

Assessment studies of EU policies should take into account issues of decent jobs and working conditions, particularly in those sectors that are female-dominated. In addition, the introduction of participatory procedures in energy transition would give women an opportunity to get involved in associations or projects related to the energy sector and at the same time would contribute to a better understanding of the consumption dynamics.

3 A more effective and wider communication

Communication between the EU and all stakeholders is important so that stakeholders are aware of what is being implemented by the EU. Hence, it is important to publish and efficiently disseminate among different stakeholders in all countries: Press releases related to projects, and studies assessing finished projects and identifying the lessons to be learnt.

4 A clear vision for industry which complies with people's expectations for better wages, creation of good quality jobs and environmental justice

EU instruments could target the design and implementation of more elaborate industrial development strategies, be it through technical or financial assistance. This must be accompanied by clear national industrial strategies

5 Enforcing rules and institutions for property rights

Enforcement of intellectual property rights is becoming a central issue in attracting FDI and hence improve industries in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean.

6 Developing clusters

Linking SMEs to FDI from the EU countries in the manufacturing sector through clusters will help SMEs be part of a value-chain leading to more sustainable and internationalized activities. This will help SMEs enter the export market; guarantee the sustainability of their activities and hence increase their lifetime; improve their technology and their know-how thanks to foreign firms.

7 More decentralization in renewable energy projects

The governance issues that explain the slow start or the failure of the Mediterranean Solar Plan are directly linked to the choice of centralized production instead of a liberalization which could allow all actors to develop direct and peer-to-peer relations either by avoiding the central grid, or by using it under an open regulation.

8 A major involvement of the EU in the energy sector

EU policy regarding energy could be much more proactive based on a macro-geopolitical approach, which includes Europe, SMCs and Africa. Until now, such involvement has consisted mainly of loan facilities, technical assistance and several multilateral projects.

9 More focus on energy efficiency

It is to improve energy efficiency, the potential for which is tremendous in the North and also in the South. Better efficiency will reduce both demand and CO2 emissions.

9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

ELITE SURVEY*

The Mediterranean, as a concept and in its physical representation, is characterized by the surveyed local elites in 9 countries as a heterogeneous territory, which harbours different social, economic and political realities developing at varying paces. Below are some of the policy recommendations shared among the local elite stakeholders on how and in which areas the EU are expected to revise its approach and policies towards the region.

1 Designing a single comprehensive approach to the Mediterranean

This comprehensive approach should serve as an umbrella under which member state relations with Mediterranean states are conducted. Member state policies can align themselves within this EU policy umbrella to complement and strengthen overarching policy goals in the Mediterranean region

2 Support green investment and agriculture technologies

The EU is expected to give more space to green energy investments, water conservation, waste management and agriculture technologies in its development agenda especially when targeting the Mediterranean countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Lebanon

3 Support small farmers who suffer from a lack of competitiveness.

The Union should act more inclusively towards civil society groups and to be open to knowledge exchange for their improvement, while avoiding technocratic approach in its relations with local civil society in the region

4 EU can work to shift its security rhetoric to one that disentangles migration from security

Elites in the region believe that immigration, while perceived by Europe as a security threat, is not only a security issue, but a global crisis that requires economic, political and humanitarian solutions. Elites discussed the need for international mediation to resolve political disputes throughout the region, and additional support to combat growing terrorist threats.

5 Avoiding Eurocentric stance in policy reforms

The respondents see existing EU aid policies as Eurocentric and ineffective within their Mediterranean country-specific context. The EU is perceived to imitate its own practices in its Mediterranean policies without fully considering the needs and expectations of the societies there

6 Promote "social peace" in the Mediterranean

The EU can work jointly with the Mediterranean countries to enable "social dialogue" between the government and trade unions actors to achieve "social peace", which would benefit the state, the trade unions and workers.

7 Define new, clear-cut policies with Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia

The Union is expected to build a regional policy in MENA that protects domestic security interests and further improves current relations with its expanded southern neighbourhood including Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia especially in light of regional developments and also tensions.

8 Effective local engagement in formulating gender policies

EU should engage more with the local population in formulating its gender policies for the Mediterranean countries. The policies formed within European circles without directly contacting the local people and the civil society are not seen as effective.

9 More political presence of EU in regional issues

The full implementation of JCPOA is expected to reduce tensions in the Middle East and also is in the interest of global non-proliferation. Europe is seen as a central actor on JCPOA. The possible assistance of EU in a new diplomatic breakthrough for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also mentioned.



MEDRESET

Policy Recommendations

MEDRESET's double objective is to:

- reset our thinking, understanding, and definition of the Mediterranean: mapping a region which has changed substantially in terms of geopolitical dynamics and in key policy sectors (political ideas, agriculture and water, trade and energy, migration and mobility), identifying the old and new stakeholders, their interaction, and the major policy issues around which this interaction flows. This is based on an integrated research design and a multi-method approach that includes a substantive perception component of top-down and bottom-up actors through an elite survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups with local stakeholders on both shores of the Mediterranean.
- reset EU policies in the Mediterranean: developing new flexible policy instruments which include a variety of crucial actors and respond to the needs and expectations of people on both shores of the Mediterranean and to the changing geopolitical configuration of the area. Country-tailored policy commendations will be given for four key countries for the EU in the region: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

The Project's Consortium:



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